Inscribed to Horace

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Cuiss:

Lacking end-paper

4 vols

To
Horace Twiss Esq
With the kind regards
of Mrs. Blessington

Gore House Decr. 17th
1844

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Countess of Blessington

STRATHERN;

OR

LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

How like a Comedy is life!
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay; but to the wise,
A moral lesson each supplies.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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STRATHERN.

CHAPTER I.

We make ourselves a pleasant home,
  Deck'd out with all that's rich and rare,
As though we thought Death would not come
  To tear us from a scene so fair:
Or if we know he'll come, we b'lieve
  'Twill be when age has bent us low;
Ah me! how we ourselves deceive—
  Who knows when he will strike the blow?
Nor gilded hall, nor blooming bow'r,
  Can shield us from the Tyrant's sway;
He's ever near with fatal pow'r
  To snatch us from the realms of day,
And change our much-lov'd pleasant home
For the dark grave—where all must come.

It was a lovely morning towards the end of June, the hour about eleven, ere yet the freshness of early morn had passed from the balmy air, or from the blooming plants and flowers, redolent of perfume, which filled the small garden attached to a noble mansion in

Arlington Street, into which the apartment about to be described opened. The said garden was bounded by St. James's Park, and divided from it only by an ornamental iron railing. Innumerable birds were flitting from the luxuriant laurustinus, which flanked the windows of this mansion, and perching on the white marble border of a limpid fountain which sent up its sparkling showers towards a sky unusually blue for our nebulous climate. The notes of these feathered choristers, mingled with the gushing sound of the water, added to the charm of the scene, and almost created a doubt whether one was indeed in the purlieus of St. James's. Seated in a library, and looking out on the little wilderness of sweets before described, sate the owner of the mansion, a handsome young man of about five-and-twenty, only lately returned from an extended tour on the Continent. Glancing occasionally with great complacency from the blooming garden with its sparkling fountain at the exterior of the house, to the tastefully fitted-up and classically arranged library of the interior, he murmured to himself, "Yes, even Rhymer, with all the fastidiousness of taste attributed to him, must be satisfied with this apartment."

And well might Lord Wyndermere, the owner of the said library, think so, for few, however difficult to be pleased, could have found fault with it. The chamber was large and lofty; the ceiling, exquisitely painted, represented a charming group of the Muses, with their different attributes, surrounding Apollo. Bookcases of finely carved oak, the capitals of the columns that supported them, and the cornices richly

gilded, were crowned by antique busts of rare beauty and great value. Between each bookcase was a niche, in which, on a pedestal, stood a statue of Parian marble, the workmanship of the best sculptors of our day; for Lord Wyndermere, although a warm admirer of the antique, was a most liberal patron of modern art. A large mirror over the low chimney-piece, itself a gem of sculpture, reflected back the garden and fountain, with the bright prismatic hues of the stained glass window, which formed a frame to the picture. On each side of this lofty mirror were suspended some of the choicest works of the ancient masters, collected with great judgment, and at a vast expense, by the father of the present Lord Wyndermere, an acknowledged connoisseur in pictures. The curtains were of the richest satin, the precise colour of the oak bookcases, and the chairs and sofas were covered with the same costly material. The uncut velvet pile carpet, of a substance which prevented a footfall from being heard, was of the peculiar tint denominated *Raphael* green, from the preference evinced for the colour by that glorious artist, and the walls were of similar hue. A *déjeûner*, served on the most delicate and costly *Sèvres* porcelain, was placed on a table near the open window, while dumb-waiters, covered with snowy damask, and piled with plate, forks, and spoons, stood near the two chairs intended for the persons who were to partake the repast. Fruit, which might be likened to the golden produce of the fabled Hesperides, if not from its bloom, at least from the enormous cost of its culture, crowned the breakfast-table, mingled with every description of cake and bread furnished by mo-

dern refinement, to stimulate the sated appetite of an epicure.

At length the expected guest arrived; and to the no slight disappointment of his host, who expected some expression of admiration at the really charming scene into which he was ushered, he took his seat at the table, placed his napkin on his knees, and began to discuss the dainties set before him. While doing so, he occasionally glanced around, but no look of satisfaction or approval marked his saturnine countenance.

"Who is your baker, my good lord?" asked he.

"He is one who appertains to my establishment at Wyndermere Castle, and is considered so good, that I had him up here."

"Umph," uttered Rhymer, in a sound half-groan, half-sigh, laying down the delicate roll he had tasted.

"I fear you do not like the rolls, will you try these breakfast-cakes? I think you will find them good."

The breakfast-cake was cut, tasted, and almost as quickly relinquished as the roll, Mr. Rhymer's countenance becoming considerably lengthened after the unsuccessful experiment. A new-laid egg was recommended by the host, and, having been broken, was pronounced to have the odour of the stable. A delicate slice of cold chicken was found to be tough. A *pâté de Périgord* was declined somewhat disdainfully. The offer of cold ham or tongue met no better chance; and the chocolate was discovered to have a peculiar and not agreeable flavour. Marmalade was then tried, and with this *dernière ressource* a slight *déjeûner* was effected, to the no small discomfiture of the kind host, who saw with regret that his luxuriously-served board

afforded nothing to satisfy the fastidious taste of his guest.

"What an agreeable day we had at Strathern's!" observed Lord Wyndermere, anxious to dispel the awkwardness occasioned by the total failure of his *recherché* breakfast.

"Do you think so?" was the laconic reply of Mr. Rhymer. "For my part," continued he, "I saw little to admire in the *fête*. There was, it is true, the same ostentatious display of splendour which always characterizes that gentleman's *fêtes*, but the evident effort to make the thing go off well, and the superabundant appliances for amusement, in my opinion, defeated the end aimed at. It was like the apple-pie, with too many quinces."

"You must, indeed, be difficult to be pleased; for surely nothing was left undone to contribute to the pleasure of the guests?"

"Except the host's concealing his self-complacency on the occasion. The too visible display of that, I confess, interfered very much with mine, as he moved about smiling on all, saying something civil to everybody—ay, even to those paid for exhibiting their talents to the company."

"There is no satisfying you, Mr. Rhymer. It was only a few days ago that I heard you find fault with Melbrook for being a careless Amphitryon, and wandering among his *convives*, as if he were only a visiter, like the rest."

"Yes, my good lord, I *did* find fault, for I thought that the *nonchalance* of Melbrook towards his aristocratic guests, a mere *parvenu* as he is known to be,

amounted to little short of insolence. With Strathern, who is a man of high family, it is quite different. *Nonchalance* would *in him* have been much more *comme-il-faut*, in my opinion, than the *empressement* he displayed, reminding one of a provincial Boniface, 'on hospitable thoughts intent,' thinking of everyone's comfort but his own."

"I observed nothing of all this. *Au contraire*, I consider Strathern to be the best bred, as well as the most hospitable man I know."

"And so, I dare say, think many others; for people are too indolent to differ from the herd; and when a peculiarly indulgent person like your lordship has pronounced such an opinion, others will not be found wanting to adopt it."

"I disclaim all right to indulgence with regard to Strathern and his *fête*," observed Lord Wyndermere, "for neither require it. How well the *Diva* sang there; I thought I never heard her in such good voice."

"Strange to say, it struck me—but it must have been only fancy—that she sang terribly out of tune. The ballet, too, went off flatly; the *danseuses* could not leave the earth, of which they seemed to me to form too palpable a portion to give any pleasure by their evolutions. It was a great mistake in Strathern to adopt this innovation, unless, indeed, he had constructed an inclined plane on the principle of the theatres, where these *odalisques* exhibit their feats, and sleight of feet, and by the elasticity of which they are enabled to ascend into air for a brief moment. On this ascent depends all the poetry of dancing, and

consequently its charm—at least for refined minds. Without it the best *danseuse* appears to no greater advantage than the Blowsabellas who figure in barbarous Scots reels and Irish jigs, and so, to my eyes, appeared the graceful Taglioni, and the bounding Cerito, at Strathern's *fête*."

"I see that you are determined to discover faults; but ought not the intention of the giver of the entertainment to find favour with you! Consider the lavish expense to furnish amusement."

"I *have* considered it, and the motive too, as I formerly stated—Ostentation."

"I differ with you in opinion, Mr. Rhymer."

"Very naturally. I am, as every body will tell you, very old, and my opinions are influenced by my age, while your lordship is young, *very* young indeed," said the speaker, more as if in pity than in approval.

"I hear we are to have a fine concert at the Duke of Aberfield's."

"I dare say it will be a failure, as all his Grace of Aberfield's concerts are. The Duke seems never to lose the consciousness of his rank, and wishes that the weight of his ducal coronet should oppress others as much as it evidently does himself, poor vain man! Would you believe it?—when he writes to me, he commences with 'My good Sir'—yes, positively, My good Sir—ay, and ends in the same style."

"I believe that he writes 'My good Lord,' to me," said Lord Wyndermere, who, never having attached the slightest importance to the point, remembered not, at the moment, what were the precise words

in which the Duke of Aberfield usually addressed him, but who, observing that the *amour propre* of Mr. Rhymer was wounded by the imagined slight, wished to soothe it by the assertion.

"Could you refer to a note from his ungracious grace, to satisfy me that he uses peers as disdainfully as he does commoners?" said the cynic.

"Yes, I think there is one in this drawer," replied Lord Wyndermere, opening one in the library-table, from which he drew a note from the Duke, and handed it to Mr. Rhymer.

"I was right," said the latter, with bitterness, as he glanced over the note; he writes to you 'My dear Lord;' it is only to persons like me that he uses the word *good* instead of *dear*. But how could a plain 'Mr.', whatever might be his claims to notice, be dear to the Duke of Aberfield, unless, indeed, he was sufficiently skilled in antiquarian lore to discover in what degree of consanguinity his grace stands to the first of the Scottish kings?"

"You are severe on him," observed Lord Wyndermere; "I never noticed anything offensive in the manners or bearing of the Duke; both are stately, I own, but no one can be more courteous."

"Again you are too indulgent, my lord, indeed you are. You will spoil society, as children are spoilt, by too much kindness. It won't do, it will not, I assure you. I am an old man, though not nearly so old as some of my kind friends would wish to make me out, and I know by experience that the good-natured are trifled with and laughed at, while the fastidious and severe are feared and respected."

"*Your* experience has, I should think, not been much exercised in the good-natured line," said Lord Wyndermere, laughing. "Or was it, after having tried its inefficacy, as a means of acquiring popularity in society, that you had recourse to..."

"*Ill-nature*, you would say," resumed Mr. Rhymer. "Well, be it so; call me morose, cynic, what you will, but defend me from being confounded with the grinning herd who flock from house to house, bepraising all and every thing, pleased with every body, and most with self. *A-propos* of being pleased, as you have wished for my opinion of your new house, may I tell you candidly that I don't like it."

"Indeed, I am sorry for that."

"This library, *par exemple*, is not fitted up to my taste. Oak and gold is bad. Gilding should only be used in bookcases for ladies; *they* like glitter and show; but a man's library should be grave and plain. Then your books are too richly bound; they look as if they belonged to a *petit-maître*, or a retired citizen. Books, when very finely bound, convey the notion that they are not meant to be much read. The room altogether looks too gay for a place to study in. The hangings, too, are not sufficiently subdued; the frames of the mirrors and pictures are too rich. In short, my dear lord, the *ensemble* is not precisely such as a man of refined taste could approve."

Having rendered his host thoroughly dissatisfied with all that had previously pleased him in the arrangement of his house, Mr. Rhymer wished him good morning, saying that he must call on the Duchess

of Rochdale, who wanted to consult him on a matter of taste.

"And this is the man whom I heard last night uttering the most flattering compliments to Strathern about his *fête*," said Lord Wyndermere to himself. "Where are we to look for truth, if not among those whose position and age should exempt them from the incentive to deception? I wish I had not asked the old cynic to come and see my house; he will now go and decry it to every one he meets, and, after having incurred a heavy expense in furnishing it, I shall be considered a man of bad taste. The only person who is really frank and kind is Strathern, and yet how old Rhymer abused *his* taste! I thought this room perfection, and now—yet what a fool I am to be put out of conceit with it, because it happens not to please that ill-natured old man, who has always something spiteful to say of every thing and every body! I wonder people tolerate him, for I am sure I can see no reason."

"He is rich, and that, in this great wilderness of brick and mortar, is the best of all reasons," said Strathern, who had entered the library, while Lord Wyndermere was indulging his soliloquy aloud, and was so engrossed by the subject of it that he had not heard the announcement of his visiter's name by the servant who had ushered him in.

"And so you not only think, my dear lord—a rare occupation for a man of fashion in London to indulge in—but what is more dangerous, you think *aloud*," resumed Strathern, after the first salutations had past. "I met Rhymer near your door, and he looked so

unusually complacent, that I guessed he had been at his old work, endeavouring to render some one dissatisfied. He has in some measure succeeded, if I may judge from the few words I heard you pronounce. Is it not so?"

Lord Wyndermere acknowledged the fact, and repeated the comments made by Mr. Rhymer on his house.

"You must not be disconcerted by his remarks," observed Strathern; "for, if I may be allowed to parody the observation applied to Charles II., I should say that Rhymer is known never to have *said* a kind thing, or never to have *done* an unkind one. He has come to the assistance of many a man of genius in those vicissitudes to which individuals of that class more than any other are liable, when they depend on literature for support. Towards artists, his good word to would-be patrons, possessed of more gold than taste, has never been wanting; yet, such is his peculiarity, that, while ready to *serve*, he is seldom willing to avoid offending, and evidently finds a pleasure in saying disagreeable things. Even his compliments, and they are few and far between, have something in them which leave those present when they are paid in doubt whether they do not admit of another and less kind interpretation, although the individual to whom they are addressed may not be aware of it. Nevertheless, on the whole, perhaps the system of Rhymer, if system it be, is preferable to that of the generality of persons, who make it a point to *say* civil things, and leave undone kind ones."

"You take the good-natured side of the question,

but so you always do," replied Lord Wyndermere. "I confess that I am less indulgent."

"I find it more agreeable to do so. My philosophy has taught me that indulgence to the foibles of others, and above all to those which characterize society, brings its own exceeding great reward, in an equanimity of humour and cheerfulness, incompatible with a cynical disposition, which discovers evils it cannot hope to amend, and dwells more on the dark than on the bright side of human nature. I know many who can see in Rhymer only the ill-natured satirist, who, by a sneer, or an epigrammatic *bon-mot*, wounds their vanity, while I endeavour to forget this weakness in him, and remember the good he *does*, not the evil he *speaks*."

"But is there not something egotistical in your philosophy?"

"*Peut-être, mais à quoi bon* is that of the cynic? Does it correct the errors it exposes, or does it render the discoverer a better man? Were we all, when detecting defects in our acquaintances, to render justice to the good qualities to which they are frequently allied, be assured the balance would be frequently in favour of the latter, and this conviction, by giving us a better opinion of our species, would ensure us more felicity."

"Yours, my dear Strathern, must be a happy temperament."

"I believe you are right, and there is a great deal in this, more, ay much more, than people imagine. Half the defects of mankind may be traced to an unhappy temperament, while the very victims to this

pervading and baneful influence are themselves unconscious of its existence. It supplies gall to the pen of the satirist, and venom to the tongue of the wit. May not Rhymer's sarcastic *bon-mots* and insidious compliments be accounted for by this constitutional *malaise*, which, continually preying on him, engenders the bitterness which finds so little indulgence, even from those who are aware of his good qualities? Look at the countenances of those known to be sarcastic, and you will observe the yellow tinge, dull eye, and scornful lip which indicate confirmed derangement of the biliary system, producing one of the greatest and least-pitied of all the evils to which poor humanity is heir, and which, whether leading, as it frequently does, to insanity, or exhibiting itself in bitter satire, is equally entitled to commiseration."

"Then you are disposed to think that,

> "'When poor witlings go astray,
> Their bile is more in fault than they.'"

"Even so; and I would recommend a skilful physician, in preference to a moralist, for its cure. I never peruse any of the spiteful diatribes of the day, however witty, without a sentiment of pity for its author, the acuteness of whose sufferings, under his peculiar disease, may be judged by the bitterness of his effusions; and I learn almost to forgive Swift his malice, when I reflect on the physical cause that led to such a moral result. But a truce to philosophy. Let me go over your house, which, from the specimen of it afforded by this library, must, I am persuaded, be arranged with excellent taste."

"You mean to indemnify me for the disapproval of Rhymer; but now that you have initiated me into the mysteries of physical causes and their effects, while pardoning *his* censure, I shall be inclined to question the justice of *your praise*, and attribute it to the happy temperament which enables you to see everything *en beau*."

"And so turn the arms with which my philosophy has furnished you against myself? You must not, however, mistake me so far as to imagine that I assign an undue weight to physical causes, or that I doubt the efficacy of moral influence to subdue their effects, if powerless to eradicate the cause. Observe the beneficent action often following quickly the unkind word, like the spear of Telephus healing the wound it inflicted. Is not this a convincing proof of the moral influence exercised to atone for the physical?"

"You have taught me to feel much more leniently than I was disposed to do towards the failings of the cynical Rhymer, and henceforth, when I encounter persons with a similar taste for saying ill-natured things, I will hope that like him they atone for their words by their deeds."

"Ill-regulated minds and unhealthy bodies produce more cynics than bad hearts. Nay, wit itself, that 'lightning of the mind,' frequently tempts its possessors to give utterance to *bon-mots* bearing the stamp of ill-nature, when that sentiment really had no part in dictating them. The wish to shine in society—and what method of doing this is so easy for a clever person as brilliant sallies and pointed sarcasms?—

originates most of the *méchancetés spirituelles*, which, though they cause a wit to be feared in society, render him also courted, and establish for him a certain reputation, which, in my opinion, is neither to be desired nor envied."

"Yet I have known some men who, though acknowledged wits, seldom, if ever, indulged in the *malice* supposed to appertain to their craft."

"So have I also, and this self-control impressed me with a very high opinion in their favour. To resist giving expression to the thousand brilliant *mots* suggested by a lively imagination called into action by some folly or mistake, committed by the less gifted with whom he associates, *proves* at once that he who practises this restraint possesses three estimable qualities—a fine understanding, a good heart, and a true politeness."

"It is much to be wished that such examples among men of wit were more common. It would lessen the jealousy and dislike entertained against them by those who are more calculated to dread than to comprehend their intellectual superiority."

The striking of the *pendule* on the mantelpiece warned Strathern that his visit had already passed the usual time allowed for morning calls, and that he had not yet seen more than the library of Lord Wyndermere. He therefore proposed to his friend, if not inconvenient, to let him see the dining and drawing-rooms, apologizing, at the same time, for having already so unreasonably trespassed on his leisure.

"Far from it, I assure you," replied Lord Wyndermere. "Your visit has given me the greatest

pleasure—a pleasure, too, so rarely enjoyed in this noisy, bustling town, where every one seems to be in too great a hurry to pause, to listen, or to converse rationally, that I can duly appreciate a sober hour's chat, exempt from scandal and ill-nature, and only wish I could more frequently count on such a gratification."

The *salle-à-manger*, divided by a large ante-room from the library, opened on one side into an extensive conservatory, filled with the choicest plants and flowers. The walls were encrusted with exquisite fragments of *alto* and *basso rilievo*, brought from Greece and Italy, and some noble statues by the best of our modern sculptors, formed the sole ornaments. The drawing-rooms, three *en suite*, were spacious and lofty, and were furnished in the style of Louis XIV. Nothing could be in better keeping. Splendour and taste were happily blended, and the union produced the most charming effect. The admirable collection of pictures which graced the silk-panelled walls entirely engrossed Strathern's attention. He could have devoted days instead of hours to their contemplation, and was pleased to find that Lord Wyndermere, with all his reserve of manner, was almost as enthusiastic an admirer of fine paintings as himself, and, what is more rare, an excellent judge. Nothing so soon leads to an agreeable familiarity as the discovery of a similarity of tastes, and the two friends felt, as they conversed on the comparative merits of the different masters whose works were before them, that they had never really felt drawn towards each other so much as during their *tête-à-tête* visit of that

day, and they mutually promised that the pleasure they then enjoyed should often be repeated.

"I see that you, like me, feel that the true way of encouraging art is to live surrounded by the best specimens it can produce," said Strathern.

"Those who fill galleries, which they only enter when they wish to exhibit the treasures they contain, are not, in my opinion, real lovers of the fine arts," observed Lord Wyndermere. "I like to have statues, pictures, and books, continually within my reach. To be able to look from a book to some beautiful picture or fine statue, until we grow to love these possessions as our household gods, is the way to enjoy them, and this I have long learned to do. My collection, too, is endeared to me by being associated in my mind with him who selected the greater portion of it, and who loved it as well as I do—my excellent father; and I seldom look at any of these treasures without thanking him who provided and taught me to appreciate them."

"You must come and see me *sans cérémonie*," said Strathern, more and more pleased with his host, "and we will examine my collection free from interruption. You have only seen my pictures and statues in a crowd; indeed I should be considered *exigeant*, or, as our countrymen say, a bore, if I asked the generality of people to visit the works of art I possess; but you, who have proved how well you understand these matters, will not consider me so, and will soon come to Strathern House."

"We have some liberal patrons of art in England among the nobility and gentry," observed Lord Wyn-

dermere, "and still more among what are designated the middle classes, men who, having made large fortunes, have the good taste to expend a considerable portion of their wealth in the acquisition of fine pictures. I have been to see many collections in houses, the names of whose owners I had not heard until named to me by some of our best artists as their most generous patrons, and I have been delighted at witnessing the gems they possess, and their just appreciation of them. I confess to you I have felt proud of England when I visited those collections, and was more than ever ready to admit the justice of a celebrated foreigner's remark, that the middle class in England is, indeed, most estimable, possessing much of the quality of its favourite beverage, beer, having neither the froth attributed to the fashionable portion of the highest class, nor the dregs which appertain to the lower."

"You are right in agreeing in the opinion, for the more I see of my countrymen, the more am I convinced of the peculiar worth of this portion of them. What good men of business they make in the House of Commons! Their habits of application, and constant contact with the world, give them a great advantage over the generality of country gentlemen, and enable them to discern much more quickly the practical from the theoretical, in the affairs brought before their notice. Education has made great strides in England, much greater than those who look only at the surface of society are prepared to admit, and nowhere can one be made so fully aware of this gratifying fact, as in the houses of commercial and profes-

sional men. Look at their families too. The women with cultivated minds, and highly accomplished, fitted not only to enter the most polished society, but to adorn it; and the young men prepared to distinguish themselves not merely in the professions to which they have been bred, but to acquit themselves in a more elevated sphere whenever they may be called to it."

"How different to the citizens of fifty years ago that we read of, when the accumulation of wealth, and sordid habits of economy, were their peculiar and striking characteristics!"

"Yes, the march of intellect has been indeed a triumphant one in England; and though some portion of our population may have been dazzled by too much light, as those long kept in darkness are apt to be when first it breaks on them, and may not see their way so clearly as could be wished, every day will bring an amelioration of the *few disadvantages* peculiar to the rapid transitions from a stage of comparative ignorance to one of civilization and refinement."

"The old adage, 'a little learning is a dangerous thing,' is a true one; the draught has now been so freely dispensed, that the danger to be apprehended from superficial knowledge will soon disappear. Good bye, let me see you soon."

CHAPTER II.

"The early cultivation of a taste for the Fine Arts is one of the best preventives against the temptations to which so many young men of large fortunes fall a prey, when first emerged from the trammels of a college life; for he, who finds pleasure in the contemplation of a fine picture or statue, will be little disposed to enter into the coarse and sensual amusements in which young men with less refined tastes pass their time."

Having introduced our hero to our readers, it is necessary that we should make them acquainted with his birth, parentage, and education. Born of an ancient family, and allied to some of the noblest in the land, it was his misfortune to become an orphan while yet in his childhood, his parents being snatched from life, ere he had attained his ninth year. From them he inherited good looks, abilities of no common order, and a fortune, which though not above half the amount guessed at by the world, always so liberal in giving to the rich, was, nevertheless, quite equal to the support of an expenditure on a scale of almost princely hospitality. The guardian, to whose care Strathern had been bequeathed, was a bachelor of

great wealth and acknowledged taste. In his mansion, filled with works of art in painting and sculpture, and adorned with all that could interest the virtuoso, or charm the man of refined taste, his ward had been wont to pass the vacations from school, and had there imbibed that knowledge of art and love for its *chef d'œuvres*, which, when implanted in early life, remains a distinguishing characteristic through existence, however protracted it may be. The education bestowed on Strathern was such as to cultivate to the utmost extent the natural abilities with which he was blessed, and he applied himself with a diligence to the acquirement of all that could be taught, that won the admiration of his contemporaries and the esteem of his tutor. He left Christ Church with a reputation for talent and scholarship, that might have excited the envy of his companions, had not his freedom from vanity and his kindness of heart made him so many friends that envy was lost in esteem, or, if not lost, at least it was silenced by the well-merited popularity he had attained.

Perhaps the generosity of Strathern had something to do in gaining him this general good-will. The allowance allotted him by his guardian being on an unusually liberal scale, he was enabled to extricate many of his college friends from the embarrassments into which their improvidence not unfrequently plunged them; and he possessed the rare and difficult to be acquired art of conferring favours in a manner which precluded ingratitude, by converting the obliged debtors into devoted friends, through the tact and delicacy with which he came forward to their assistance. The gratitude which his delicate mode of ren-

dering services, still more than the value of the act itself, awakened, he attributed to the natural goodness of those he served, not aware that similar or even greater benefits, if conferred in a different mode, would have been forgotten in the humiliation they occasioned; hence Strathern formed a somewhat erroneous opinion of mankind in general, and invested those of it, in particular, with whom he associated, with many qualities of which they possessed barely the semblance. His was a fine nature, and his defects, if defects they might be denominated, arose from its goodness, like the weeds which spring up in too rich and fertile a soil.

A minority of twelve years enabled Lord Argentyn, the guardian of Strathern, to invest a large sum in the funds from the yearly revenue of his ward, so that on attaining his twenty-first year our hero found himself master of an estate of fifteen thousand a year, and about two hundred thousand pounds in the funds. Lord Argentyn, in rendering up his trust, endeavoured to impress on the mind of his late ward the prudence of expending this large capital, or at least the greater portion of it, in the purchase of an estate which would increase his importance in the country, and bind him still more to its interests. Such was his influence over the mind of Strathern, that it is more than probable his counsel would have been adopted, had he lived long enough to enforce it; but, unhappily for his ward, three months after he had attained his majority, Lord Argentyn died suddenly of a complaint of the heart, which had baffled the skill of his physicians, lamented by all who knew him, and truly

mourned by the young man to whom he had acted as a father. His large fortune, which was unentailed, he bequeathed to a relative, who inherited the title, with a reversion to Strathern, in case the said relative died without a son, a contingency not to be anticipated, as he was already the father of three healthy boys, and husband to a lady likely to bless him with more branches to the support of the family tree.

When Strathern looked around on the mansion, in which he had passed so many happy days, and on the objects no less endeared to him by habit and association than by their intrinsic value—objects collected at an immense cost from the choicest galleries in Italy—he felt like a banished man, looking for the last time on his home, and the household gods that had endeared it to him. Gladly would he have invested a large portion of his funded property in the purchase of this house, and the glorious works of art that filled it; but unfortunately, as not only he, but the inheritor of it, considered, it was so strictly entailed, that neither the mansion nor any part of its treasures could be sold; and the present Lord Argentyn found himself the owner of statues and pictures, which, having no taste for them, he would gladly have exchanged for some of the thousands of Strathern.

So habituated had our hero become to the sight of works of art, that he had grown to think them absolutely necessary to his enjoyment. Walls without pictures by the best masters, and galleries without statues by the greatest sculptors, seemed to him to be not only unendurable, but a positive reproach to any one who possessed the means of procuring them; so he deter-

mined on first providing a house fit for the reception of such treasures, and then visiting Italy in search of them. No sooner was it known that the rich Mr. Strathern wished to purchase a mansion than innumerable ones were offered for his choice; but, accustomed to the spacious and lofty apartments of Argentyn House, with its princely library, picture, and statue gallery, he could find no dwelling to satisfy his taste, and eventually he determined on erecting one which should combine all that he required.

Behold him, then, ere yet he had numbered twenty-two years, and when most men of his time of life are occupied only in enjoying the present hour, embarked in an undertaking seldom contemplated before a man has reached a much more mature age. His college friends, who flocked around him in London as they had done at Christ Church, first endeavoured to reason him out of the folly, as they termed it, of plunging into brick and mortar, repeating to him the hackneyed proverb that "Fools build houses for wise men to live in;" and having failed to reason him out of his plan, then tried ridicule, that weapon so successful when aimed at the weak, but with no better result, for Strathern was firm. They could not conceive, and so they told him, what business he could have with a better house than any of the numerous ones, with bills posted in the windows, to be seen in all the fashionable squares, or in Carlton-garden, or terrace; but Strathern was not a man likely to consult his associates in carrying out plans for his own individual comfort, nor to imagine that they could judge accurately of what was necessary to the gratification of his taste.

"There is a capital house to be let in Carlton Gardens," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, one of Strathern's *soi-disant* friends; "it belonged to poor Winstanley, who furnished it splendidly, as the auctioneers say. How many pleasant nights we had there! Poor Winstanley, what a pity that he ruined himself so soon!"

"Do you remember what delicious *petits soupers* he used to give after the opera?" observed Sir Henry Devereux. "There one was always certain to find the *élite* of the *corps de ballet*—pleasant creatures, and not *gênant*. Poor Winstanley! Never shall I forget when, waiting for him one day in what was called his library, the fancy came into my head to take down a book, when, judge my surprise, I discovered that what appeared to be a goodly array of richly bound volumes were only boards covered with leather, gilt and lettered to look like them, and which served as doors to *armoires*, which held his wardrobe. 'Books!' exclaimed poor Winstanley, when I told him my disappointment, 'what the deuce should I do with books? I, who seldom can find time to read a newspaper, or dip into the *Racing Calendar*.' I dare say these very same *armoires* are still in the house, with half a hundred capital inventions of poor Win's, who, to do him justice, really understood comfort. You cannot do better, Strathern, than secure that house, and revive the *petits soupers*."

"I should not like the associations such a dwelling would call up," replied Strathern. "*Petits soupers* with the *élite* of the *corps de ballet*—those pleasant creatures, *sans gêne*—are not at all to my taste. Such

company is, in my opinion, much more suited to old and *blasé* voluptuaries, no longer capable of appreciating the charm of good female society, than to young men not yet palled with less censurable pleasures, or demoralized by their abuse."

"It is *très mauvais genre*, also," observed Lord Hazleden, "and only adopted by men proverbial for *mauvais ton* and uncultivated minds, who, conscious of their own unworthiness to seek the society of refined women or to conciliate their good opinion, are content to mix with those of the fair sex who are as ignorant as themselves, and with whom there is no *géne*."

"But what think you of men who, not content with engaging the women of the *corps de ballet* to their parties, invite also the men?"

"*Est, il possible?* '*O tempora, o mores!*' Can such things be?"

"What a prudish fellow you are, Hazleden!" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "you will make Strathern as squeamish as yourself. But, *n'importe*, every man to his fancy, as the old adage says. You must, however, admit that Carlton Gardens and Terrace are good situations — near the theatres, the opera, the clubs."

"They may be so for those who rely on such places for amusement, and who wish to spare their carriage-horses at night. But I confess that I like only mansions *entre cour et jardin*, as at Paris, and not houses all in a row, with their exteriors so exactly similar that one of the owners may be puzzled to decide whether he is knocking at his own door or at that of his neighbour, Mr. Tomkins. Then I dislike the sound of the

rumbling of omnibuses and stage-coaches from Pall Mall, and the sight of flowers and plants begrimed with soot and smoke in the gardens which front the said houses. I also dislike being awoke at early morn by the lowing of the cows while being milked, the cries of the unhealthy, town-pent children, sent to partake their produce, the loud voices of their gossiping nurse-maids, and the still louder objurgations of the keepers of the said cows. Then look at the moving scene, daily, hourly presented, from the windows of these houses. Can any thing be less agreeable? Crowds of pedestrians always of the lowest description; dirty children, with slip-shod maidens, more occupied in flirtations with soldiers or servants out of place, than in looking after the poor little creatures committed to their charge; broken-down tradesmen and suspicious-looking individuals, on whom the police keep a sharp look-out, bestride the benches, ruminating on their cares, or spelling over some one of the vile papers which inculcate vengeance for them. Add to the pleasure of all this the never-ceasing effluvia of bad tobacco with which the atmosphere is impregnated, and you must admit that the situation you have recommended is any thing but agreeable. I have omitted noticing among the advantage of houses in a row, hearing the young ladies of your next neighbours practising the harp and pianoforte, and squalling under the tuition of a singing master, until you are almost tempted to wish that music was an unknown science. Oh, no! defend me from inhabiting one of these houses, in which handsome furniture looks as much out of its element as in a watering-place."

It was some time ere Strathern found a site which he deemed worthy of erecting a mansion on. Pleasure-grounds and a garden he considered to be indispensable adjuncts to his dwelling, and it was no easy task to find space for these in a metropolis so densely populated as London. At length he discovered and became the purchaser of ten or twelve acres of land near Knightsbridge, still possessing many fine old trees, the remains of former park grounds, ere London had gone out of town, and when what has now almost ceased to be suburbs, owing to the extension of new terraces, squares, and crescents, was occupied by stately and cumbrous mansions, standing in their own well-timbered lawns, and surrounded by thick shrubberies. He next consulted one of the best architects of the day, and, having explained his wishes to him, arranged for their being carried into execution. There was only one thing left unsettled; and that was precisely what older and wiser persons would have thought most important, namely, the sum to be expended. While dwelling on the necessity of spacious drawing-rooms, noble library, picture and statue-galleries, summer and winter *salles à manger*, lofty conservatories, *salle de bal*, &c., with a stately peristyle, which should give grandeur to the house and afford shelter to its visiters, and a vestibule, in which even the most dainty dame might pause to admire its proportions while uncloaking, without a risk of cold or discomfort, Strathern omitted to demand what the probable expense of such a building might be, and the still more prudent plan of contracting for it never entered his head. The architect saw that he had an unwary and

liberal employer to deal with; and so few of this description are now to be met, that he determined to profit by the chance thrown in his way. An elevation and ground-plan were speedily submitted for Strathern's approval; every possible expedition in the erection and completion was promised, and, *en attendant*, our hero determined to pass a year or two on the Continent while his future abode was building.

Before the commencement of autumn, the period he had fixed for his departure, he found himself, without an effort on his part, thrown into the vortex of fashionable life — that vortex, which, once entered, it is so difficult to escape from. Invitations poured in on him daily for *déjeûners dansants*, dinners, balls, concerts, and parties, in such profusion, that to attend even half the number would have been a fatiguing operation; and those he did go to so exactly resembled each other, that one might have served as a specimen of all. There might be seen the same kind of decorations, the same style of houses, the same crowd of faces, wearing the same expression of *ennui*, and the same viands and refreshments. It struck him with surprise, as it has done many others new to London fashionable life, that such numbers could be drawn together night after night to share in the same inane round of amusements, which each individual of the circle declared to be tiresome and *ennuyeux*. The guests invited to these *fêtes* were always thrice more than the houses could contain, the consequences of which were that the crowd and heat were intolerable, and the mingled odours of flowers and perfumed handkerchiefs, with other less agreeable ones, insupport-

able. The result of all this was, that ladies, however cold on other occasions, were on these in the melting mood—at least if their flushed cheeks and humid foreheads might be received as evidence. The old looked as if escaped from a vapour-bath, their bright-coloured turbans and toques offering a striking contrast to the faces they were meant to adorn; the middle-aged appeared ten years older, and the young and fair faded, as delicate exotic plants when removed from a hothouse into a less genial air. Then, to arrive at these "splendid *fêtes*," as the newspapers termed them, was a service of danger; for in the street or square in which they were given so many vehicles got blocked in together, that, in spite of the utmost efforts of the police to preserve order, many were the ladies who, arrayed in their brilliant dresses and sparkling in diamonds, had to sit in their carriages for hours, compelled to listen to the blasphemy and vituperation of contending coachmen, the threats and entreaties of the police, mingled with the prancing of horses and the occasional crashing of panels. At the balls there was never half sufficient space for dancing, while the intense heat and oppression of the atmosphere rendered that exercise rather a painful exertion than an agreeable recreation. The parties where no dancing took place were equally numerously attended, and what the object of thus congregating could be, Strathern could not discover. It evidently was not conversation, for "How hot it is!" "What a dreadful crowd!" "And how I wish I could get away!" were the words he heard continually uttered around. The giving concerts seemed to him still more incom-

prehensible. Why persons should pay large sums to celebrated singers to go through the same music to which all present had repeatedly listened at the Opera, where the *mise en scène* added attraction to it, and where it was so infinitely better performed, did surprise him—and the more so, when he noticed how few could distinctly hear the sweet sounds, owing to the only half-suppressed conversations carrying on in various parts of the apartment, and how still fewer cared about the music, as was evidenced by the wearied countenances of some and the whispering of others. The never-ending dinners he found equally irksome. Tables covered with massive plate, the same gilded *plateaux* and *épergnes* filled with flowers, the same gilded ice-pails and candelabra, the same routine of soups and fishes replaced by French *relevés* and *entrées*, the same *hors d'œuvres* and the *buffet* charged with similar *pièces de résistances*, the same third course of *jibier*, *entremets*, *sucreries*, &c., followed by the usual abundance of hothouse fruit, might be found at every dinner. The same guests, too, might generally be seen; the same low-toned, gentle, inane attempts at conversation were carried on; the same number of servants out of liveries and in richly-laced ones, with imperturbable countenances, glided noiselessly around the table; and the same expression of weariness and *ennui* sate on the countenances of the host, hostess, and guests.

"And this is called society!" said Strathern to himself. "Better, far better, would solitude be, where, freed from the puerile shackles imposed by this heartless and artificial mode of life, one could indulge

the love of rural scenery, and hold communion with those choice spirits whose lucubrations, too seldom resorted to, fill the shelves of our libraries."

In the circles in which Strathern found himself, he observed with surprise that the most perfect equality reigned between the *spirituel* and the dull, the wise and the foolish, at least as far as conversation went. The same conventional tone of reserve and inanity was preserved, and any deviation from it was considered a violation of the good breeding which persons of fashion consider to consist in a chilliness of manner and a polished style of expression, in uttering in a low voice insipid comments on the news of the day, the places of public amusement, *la pluie, ou le beau temps.* Clever men and women seemed afraid to elevate their voices, or at least to give vent to their thoughts, lest they should pass the frozen limit, the *cordon sanitaire*, established by the despot fashion to confine all within its circle ; and the dull and foolish, forming the majority in all societies, were pleased to see the clever and witty reduced to the same level as themselves. Strathern was sometimes amused by observing when a foreigner of distinction broke the uniformity of these stupid dinners, by introducing, in his natural tone of voice, the topics which furnish general conversation on the Continent, the alarm expressed in the countenances of the host, hostess, and their other visiters. They looked on the stranger almost as a barbarian ; and while he, wishing to dispel the dulness around him, courageously, though not with so heroic a motive, like another Quintus Curtius, threw himself into the gulph of silence, they, shocked and disgusted at what

they termed his *manque de bienséance*, looked at each other in horror, and inwardly rejoiced that *they* were not like him. Strathern was often reminded at these luxurious dinners of the Frenchman's remark, that "*Les Anglais ont un grand talent pour le silence*;" while, perfectly aware that many were those among the party who could talk well on all subjects, yet such was the tyranny of custom established by fashion, that few dared to break through its boundaries. This macadamizing of manners, if not of minds, had a most petrifying effect on society. It checked the brilliant sally, the playful repartee, and the piquant anecdotes, which give it a zest and a charm, and threw a gloom over it, unknown in the social circles in other lands, where each individual endeavours to contribute to the agreeability of the party in which he finds himself. To Lord Wyndermere alone did Strathern disclose the *ennui* he experienced at the *fêtes* where he was so often a guest.

"I, too, have felt all that you describe," said that nobleman; "but beware, my dear friend, how you reveal it. A freemason, who betrayed the mysteries of his craft, would be less severely treated than he who confesses the overpowering dulness of London fashionable society, and which constitutes its chief characteristic. If each of its members were as frank as you are, who would wish to enter its pale? and the desire to enter, and the difficulties opposed by those who wish to enhance the imaginary favour of opening its portals, would be at an end. We all, who are initiated, know that we are filled by *ennui* at the parties we frequent, but we keep the secret for the plea-

sure — a spiteful one, I own—of seeing others anxious to become sharers of our supposed enjoyments. What but the sense of being possessed by this demon fills our clubs, and has given rise to the filthy and unbearable habit of smoking? a habit which so unblushingly betrays a disregard to the comfort of women, by infecting them with the odour with which our clothes are impregnated."

"How ladies can submit to receive into their society men, who, by this filthy and disgusting habit, render themselves totally unfit for it, has ever been to me a matter of utter surprise, and I confess that in my opinion there never was a condescension on their part more ill-judged. We soon learn to undervalue those who do not make us feel that they respect themselves; and, when women betray such a desire for our society as to be content to receive us, breathing, not of Araby the blest, but of cigars, we may prove ungrateful enough to think that we cannot be done without, and so dictate laws to those who ought to frame them for us. For myself, I feel ashamed for my sex, when I see men approaching ladies in *soirées* and balls, their clothes sending forth an odour that but too plainly discloses how recently they had been indulging in the abomination of smoking; and yet these delicate creatures, ready to

"die of a rose in aromatic pain,"

evince no symptom, whatever they may feel, of the disgust which so vile an effluvium is calculated to excite."

"As long as women are taught to think that to form a good marriage is the end and aim of their lives,

they will, to accomplish this object, consent to tolerate habits in men from which they naturally recoil in disgust, and will carefully conceal their distaste, lest it should militate against the sole project they have in view—a good settlement for life."

"Poor girls! they are much more to be pitied than blamed. This husband-hunting system is the result of the unequal distribution of fortune in the families of the rich and noble in England. Young women with us, of high birth, and nurtured in luxury, are so scantily portioned, that, should they not succeed in forming eligible marriages, no resource awaits them but to wed some *parvenu*, with no other recommendation than his wealth, or to wear out their lives as dependants in the establishments of their elder brothers or married sisters, where they are not always certain to be treated with that kindness to which their helpless position has so strong a claim. The wife of the lordly brother is seldom found to be amicably disposed towards his dependant sisters; nor is the husband of a sister, in general, more partial to their becoming fixtures in his house. What, then, can be more dreaded by young women than the chance of such a fate as I have described? and, actuated by the fear of it, can it be wondered at that they submit to many innovations in *les bienséances* on the part of men, which, under other circumstances, they would never tolerate?"

"I agree with you most fully, and heartily wish that a provision sufficiently large to support unmarried women in comfort and independence should be secured by fathers to their daughters, though at the risk of leaving the heir presumptive a few thousands a-year less."

"Were this plan adopted, women would resume the natural good taste and decent dignity which their dependant position so often compels them to abdicate, and men would be obliged to observe that respectful deference towards them to which they are entitled."

"This would be, indeed, a most desirable change, and one devoutly to be wished for; but, with estates so strictly entailed on eldest sons, as English ones generally are, and with provisions so limited for younger children, I fear there is little chance of its adoption, unless fathers and mothers show more inclination than the greater part of them are at present disposed to do to retrench their heavy expenditures, in order to lay by from their incomes wherewithal to add to the too scanty portions allotted to their daughters."

"And this, I fear, they are too selfish to do, even if they had the power; for the luxurious habits, overgrown establishments, and carelessness in checking the impositions practised on them, so characteristic of the aristocracy of our time, have involved the greater number of them in pecuniary difficulties which leave them only barely sufficient, if even that, to meet the yearly demands on their often anticipated resources."

"It is, in truth, a sad state of things, and leaves one little hope of seeing women placed in a state of competence that would save them from the humiliating necessity of husband-hunting, with all the mortifications inseparable from such a pursuit. I love to see that greatly vilified and much-enduring class of spinsters denominated old maids blessed with the means of securing a home, however modest a one it may be, for their old age, instead of living in dependance on a

brother or married sister, performing many of the duties of a menial without receiving wages or thanks. See these poor women, after a youth passed in the splendid residences of their parents and in a round of gaiety, having failed to secure husbands, and their good looks faded, 'left to wither on the virgin stem,' with a stipend wholly inadequate to provide any of the comforts of life, deemed incumbrances by those on whom they depend, and painfully awake to the disagreeableness of their position; the gravity and pensiveness it is so well calculated to awaken draws on them the imputation of being 'ill-humoured old maids,' 'tiresome old spinsters,' and all the various other offensive epithets applied by the unthinking and unfeeling to those whom they ought to commiserate rather than deride."

"Yes, there are few classes more deserving esteem than that denominated old maids. What kind and tender nurses to the sick, what affectionate and sympathising companions to the sorrowful, do the maiden aunts to be found in families make! They are the never-failing resource of all who require their aid, and the providence of nephews and nieces, down to the second and third generation, in all the tribulations peculiar to the imprudence of youth. They are the conscientious guardians to whom orphan girls can be confided by dying mothers, whose last hours are soothed by the certainty of how faithfully their injunctions will be fulfilled. They are the sedate chaperons to supply a mother's place, when pleasure or business call that parent from her daughters; in short, they are, in my opinion, a comfort in every family, and should be treated with marked distinction."

"We are not deficient in humanity, Heaven knows, in England; we have asylums and funds to meet many cases of distress and hardship. Why should we not subscribe a sum, to be disposed of in adding, according as the case may require it, to the narrow incomes of unmarried women, such as we have described, the fund to be vested in proper hands, and the yearly stipend to be paid without subjecting those who require it to the painful necessity of an application from which their delicacy and pride would revolt?"

"An excellent notion, I declare, and one to which I will readily give my support to carry into effect."

"We will prove that, though the age of chivalry is gone by, and that men no longer go about proclaiming the superiority of the ladies of their love, and offering, for their dear sakes, to redress the wrongs of the fair sex, we are ready to provide for the comfort of a portion of them peculiarly entitled to our respect, and for doing which no selfish motive can be attributed to us."

CHAPTER III.

In foreign lands 'tis wise that man should roam,
That he may learn to prize the more his home,
And conquer prejudice, besetting sin
Of those content to live for aye pent in
Their native land, by reading only taught
To know the marvels master-minds have wrought,
Or judge of other men, their morals, laws,
And customs, tracing still effect from cause.

The London season closed, Strathern went to Paris, where he entered into the same round of gaieties which tempt those who visit it for the first time; but they soon palled on his taste, and he left without regret the gay capital, for the south of France and Italy, where he expected and found more to excite his interest and occupy his mind. At Rome, where amongst the English an exaggerated report of his wealth had preceded him, Strathern found himself an object of peculiar interest to mothers and aunts with marriageable daughters and nieces. Nor, sooth to say, did these young ladies themselves betray any symptoms of disinclination to cultivate an acquaintance with a young and very good-looking man, who, even without one quarter of the fortune attributed to him, they would have

thought, if not a desirable partner for life, at least a very agreeable one for a ball. His love of the fine arts, and the patronage he bestowed on them, being known, it became the fashion for his fair countrywomen to frequent the studios where orders were executing for Strathern, whose taste was extolled, and whose liberality was the theme of every tongue. Albums were shown to him and sketches exhibited by lovely amateurs, who partook, or asserted they did, his enthusiasm for art; and the sympathy with his tastes which he met in nearly all the young ladies of his acquaintance, and the reality of which he never questioned, contributed to render their society peculiarly pleasant. He rode, walked, or danced with them all by turn; but, though he rendered justice to their attractions, he felt no disposition to appropriate any of these fair and amiable creatures, and no one among them had any cause for jealousy of her contemporaries for any partiality on his part.

"You are a happy man, Strathern," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who had lately arrived at Rome, as they strolled on the *Monte Pincio* together; "you have all the pretty girls here setting their caps at you, and all their mammas acting the civil. Such are the advantages of a large fortune; while a poor younger brother like me is only noticed by the daughter of some citizen 'of credit and renown,' who is tickled by the empty title attached to my name, or some girl of our own set, for the nonce in want of a partner to dance with."

"And you call me a happy man, because, in the belief that I am rich, these young ladies distinguish

me with their smiles! How can you suppose that such distinction can have the least value for me? I hope I am not a vain man; nevertheless, I acknowledge that I can never find pleasure in any preference accorded to me in right of my fortune, and that even the fairest and most captivating woman would find no favour in my eyes, or susceptible place in my heart, if I believed her to be influenced by mercenary motives."

"But how, with your wealth, can you ever be assured that the woman you select for your wife is not influenced by such motives?"

"Really, Beaulieu, you seem determined to humiliate me. Am I, then, so ill-looking and stupid that I may not look forward to that which all men hope to find, namely, some one woman who will like me for myself, and not for my fortune?"

"My dear fellow, no one thinks more highly of your various *agrémens*, bodily and mental, than I do; but what I meant is, that you rich men, who possess so many and such *sterling* advantages over us poor ones, have left us one which should console us, and that is the certainty that, when we are preferred, we owe it wholly to self, and not to the adventitious aid of gold."

"Yet you called me a happy man a few minutes ago! Why, the very belief you have endeavoured to inculcate would render me quite the reverse, by making me a misanthrope."

"Hah, hah, hah! A misanthrope, my dear Strathern—*you* a misanthrope! The very notion sets me laughing. There is no dread of that while you have as many thousands a-year as you are said to possess,

even if you had not the personal and mental qualifications which no one can deny you."

"You seem to be disposed to make the *amende honorable*, Beaulieu, for your previously expressed doubts of men of fortune having any chance of being wedded for their personal merits, by complimenting me on mine."

"You know, or ought to know, Strathern, that I never pay compliments, not even to those who most exact such salves to their wounded vanity — women who *have been*, but no longer are, beauties, and rich old female relatives, with hoarded wealth to leave behind them to whoever can most skilfully administer the gentle doses of flattery, so essential to soothe the irritation produced by age and its infirmities."

"I was not aware of your stubborn virtue on this point, I confess, Beauleau," said Strathern, smiling, "but I shall henceforth note it carefully down in the catalogue of your commendable qualities. But to resume: so you think rich men cannot become misanthropes?"

"Such, certainly, is my opinion, and it is founded on the impossibility of their ever seeing the world in its true unvarnished colours. Every object is beheld by them through the medium of their own prosperity. They know nothing of the contumely that awaits on poverty, and the different aspects assumed towards those not gifted with the goods of fortune, and to the wealthy. Look, for example, on the different reception given in society to an elder or younger brother of a noble family. The heir presumptive is courted and caressed on every side. He is invited everywhere;

mothers and daughters smile at his approach, and fathers promise him the shooting of their best preserves—while his brothers are, poor devils! left on the *pavé* of London nine months of the year, to dine at their clubs, and are expected to be grateful if asked now and then to a country-house, where they are merely tolerated, and not even that if they presume to pay attention to any of the young unmarried ladies, for whom mammas have always higher views."

"But do you think that rich men are exempted from seeing much of the baseness of mankind, though preserved from the slights and insolence which you say await younger brothers? Can they, unless more short-sighted than men of common sense in society generally are, be ignorant of the interested and selfish motives of many of those who flock around them with professions of friendship, and the hollowness of the smiles that welcome their presence?"

"*Peut-être* they are not, but their knowledge of all this cannot bring the painful and humiliating feelings experienced by the well-born and poor, under the annoyances to which *they* are exposed. A rich man can smile with self-complacency when he detects the selfish motives which actuate those who flatter and fawn on him, while *he* who, because he is known not to be rich, instead of adulation and attention, meets only neglect or rudeness, is stung into anger by the omission of those marks of courtesy at which the wealthy smile."

A few days after this conversation, Strathern observed a striking change in the manner of the youthful portion of his fair countrywomen at Rome. Each, when an opportunity offered, spoke of the pleasure of

retirement as far superior to the frivolous gaiety and feverish excitement of a town life, and dwelt on the advantages of competency over great possessions, which, if they furnished means for splendour, entailed, also, cares and duties from which those with humbler fortunes were exempt; in short, "a change had come o'er the spirit of their dreams," and those who had not previously known them might have been led to imagine that not only were their desires for the gauds of fortune most moderate, but that they had a positive objection to aught above a moderate competency. This sudden change had been effected by Lord Alexander Beaulieu having disclosed to them the substance of Strathern's conversation with him. Like most reported conversations, it had lost nothing in the repetition, for that young scion of nobility, who was by no means so remarkable for a strict adherence to truth as for garrulity, had told them that his friend Strathern was so vain a man that he had determined never to marry unless he could find a woman whose contempt of riches would offer a guarantee of his being preferred for himself alone, and not for his worldly goods and possessions.

Strathern smiled at the assumed disinterestedness of his fair young countrywomen, which, however, produced no effect on his stubborn heart. Nevertheless, the insight which it gave him of the artifices to which the high-born can condescend, in order to forward any scheme they may form, made a deep impression on his mind, and opened it to the first assault that suspicion —that unworthy sentiment, to be deprecated even in the old, but so detestable in the young—had succeeded

in making on it. Had Strathern any of the vanity of which his *soi-disant* friend, Lord Alexander Beaulieu, accused him, he would have been less prone to question the motives of the attentions which were so liberally showered on him; but his exemption from this natural weakness exposed him to the greater evil, suspicion, as the absence of a harmless flower may sometimes be filled up by a noxious weed. A casuist might inquire whether the vanity so generally implanted in the human breast may not be intended for some good purpose, and only tend to render its possessor ridiculous when not kept in due bounds. How many great, how many good actions have been achieved by this passion, from the days of Alexander the Great down to our own! To gratify it, how many thousands and tens of thousands have been expended, furnishing employment for millions! How many charity lists has it filled up—how many benefactions bestowed! What like vanity renders us content with ourselves, and, consequently, disposed to be content with others? It is a philanthropic passion, disposing us to good and liberal deeds, and merits more than half the encomiums unjustly bestowed on generosity. In short, I should say

> "The man who has not vanity (not music) in his soul
> Is fit for treason, stratagem, and spoil;"

for he is a discontented man, and out of such are dark misanthropes made.

Well pleased was Strathern to wander from gallery to gallery at Rome, sunning himself from the glowing walls filled with the works of the great masters.

What trains of thought were engendered by these *chef-d'œuvres*, painted by hands long mouldered in the grave, and conceived by heads into which the Almighty had infused a spark of his own divine power—that of creating! When his mind was imbued, and his heart warmed by these glorious works, he pined for companionship with some one of kindred taste, to whom he could impart the feelings they awakened, and who would share without a sneer his enthusiastic admiration. Often did his memory revert to his departed friend Lord Argentyn, who, like him, had often loitered in the haunts in which he now passed most of his hours, and who had first taught him to appreciate art. No such companionship, however, was then to be found at Rome, which, though filled with crowds of his countrymen and women, in search of the Proteus, pleasure, among many of whom pretenders to taste and connoisseurship were not rare, few, if any, really understood the merits of the pictures and statues they professed to admire, and some unconscious *bévue* frequently exposed not only their ignorance, but the hollowness of the spurious enthusiasm they affected. It is more easy to prate about art than to comprehend it, and many were those who believed they were profoundly versed in its mysteries, while acting more as appraisers than real admirers of its treasures. Some of these would-be connoisseurs would prose for hours, not on the relative merit, but the comparative value of pictures, a tact which they had acquired by listening to the opinions of acknowledged judges, and by adding them up as a salesman does a bill, until they had produced a specified valuation, when, vain of this ima-

gined knowledge in an art, the very rudiments of which they had neither acquired nor could reason on, they moved pompously about from gallery to gallery, passing off their pretended *savoir en vertu* on those too ignorant to detect its fallacy. Often did these sapient gentlemen, who beset the Roman palaces, with spectacles on nose or glass in hand, offer their services to enlighten Strathern, by pointing out, not the pictures most worthy of admiration, but those most likely to fetch a large price, if, as they termed it, brought into the market—always bearing in mind the *English*, and not the continental mart. He would turn from them with a sentiment akin to indignation when a Ruysdael, with its cold gray sky, gloomy trees, and ruined mill, was by them pronounced to be more valuable than a Raphael or a Francesco Francia, a Cuyp than an Andrea del Sarto, and a Wouvermans, with his never-failing white horse, to a Domenichino, merely because the Dutch school is preferred by the great mass of English buyers, a preference that argues little for their taste. But, while visiting and studying the works of the old masters in painting and sculpture, Strathern neglected not those of the modern, nor, above all, those of his countrymen, and glad and proud was he to find that he could conscientiously award them the palm of excellence. He commanded groups from Gibson, Westmacott, and Wyatt, and pictures from Williams; and the *partage* of a heritage between many branches of the family of a lately-deceased Roman prince having occasioned a sale—a rare event in a country where collections are scarcely ever broken up or sold—he purchased some of the *chef d'œuvres* of

Italian art, for the possession of which he had longed, but doubted the possibility of obtaining. Luckily for him, the coffers of his Holiness the Pope happened at that epoch to be unusually empty, which precluded his putting an embargo on the treasures so jealously watched over by the Pontiffs, by paying the value to the inheritor, and transferring them to the Vatican.

"Have you seen the new English beauty just arrived?" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu to Strathern, as they met one day at the Vatican. "By Jove, she is perfection! Such a complexion! After all, there is nothing to be compared with the lilies and roses of England. The pale olive of Italian beauties, and somewhat opaque hues of the French, look to great disadvantage near them. But is not that our old college chum, Fitzwarren? Yes, positively it is; and here he comes."

"Hallo, my hearties, well met! Only came last night. Heard you were here—went off in search of you; was told I should probably find you at the Vatican, so here I am;" and Lord Fitzwarren shook his two friends by the hands, with a warmth and good will that testified his satisfaction at their meeting. Of the middle size, with a fat jolly face, and of considerable *embonpoint*, Lord Fitzwarren was the picture of good humour. His hair, and he had an immense quantity, was scarcely a shade darker than his very fair complexion, and, much addicted to smile at the jokes of others, and still more at his own, he was continually exposing a set of teeth so peculiarly fine as to incur the belief in those who knew him not, that it was to display them that he was always laughing.

"Who would have dreamt of seeing you here?" observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "I really could hardly believe my eyes when I first saw you enter."

"Why, to say the truth, I can scarcely believe that I am indeed at Rome, for you know I never cared any more about its ruins, pictures, and statues than about its ancient history, which, for the life of me, I never could take any interest in. Not like you, Strathern, who were always a bookworm; but, the fact is, London had got dull and empty. My favourite hunter, Nimrod — you remember Nimrod — one of the best jumpers that ever cleared a fence, had thrown out a spavin; my stupid groom mismanaged the case, and the veterinary surgeon was called in too late. It enrages one to think of it—I lost the poor animal; never shall I find such another. Gave eight hundred for him to Evandale, who could not ride him, and I would not have parted with him for thrice that sum. Sold off my stud in a pet, for doing which half England pronounced me to be ruined. Rather hard that one cannot sell one's horses in order to buy better next year, or part with one's yacht to build a larger, but that one is immediately declared to be cleaned out. But if one determines to go abroad for a few months, then the outcry becomes general, and every tradesman to whom you may happen to owe a guinea takes alarm and duns you. You pay them, but that does not silence the report; they assert that you must be ruined, because, unless you were, you could not prefer a clear sky and good climate to our cloudy one and eight months' winter fogs. Devilish provoking, let me tell you, to be compelled to keep up the same pursuits and the same ex-

penditure when you are tired of the first, and are grown too prudent to throw away your money on things that no longer please you. Yet this you must do in England, or pass for being hard up, as they call it, or quite dished, and so be avoided by your acquaintance in general, and your *friends* in *particular*, from the dread of your requiring their assistance."

Strathern and Lord Alexander Beaulieu could not resist smiling at the unusually angry expression of Lord Fitzwarren's countenance, while they acknowledged that there was but too much truth in what he said.

"You may laugh, my good fellows," exclaimed he, "but I can tell you that, while you are both amusing yourselves, very much to your satisfaction, I dare say, here, half England is either censuring or deploring the embarrassments which are supposed to have driven you to this fair and pleasant clime. People wonder how *you*, especially, Strathern, who came into forty thousand a year, and three hundred thousand pounds in the funds — for the world gives you credit for inheriting no less—not above a year ago, could have managed to get embarrassed in so short a time. In proportion to the wealth you were supposed to possess is the severity of the censure on such a spendthrift as you are accused of being. Some declare you to be a professed gambler, though your friends know you never played; while others, ignorant of your father having died when you were a child, insist that you had ruined yourself by post-obits while in your minority. Beaulieu comes off better: they say that as he, being a younger brother, had not much to lose, he consequently is not so

blameable. The outcry about you, however, is forgotten in my imagined delinquency—yes, delinquency; for is not poverty in England considered to be nothing short of crime?—and, not to my knowledge owing at this moment a guinea at home, I am set down as one of 'them there *harrystockracy*,' as the lower orders designate us, who pay no one, and, when they have spent all, and more than they ever had, run away to the continent, and leave poor tradespeople to suffer for having trusted them."

"We must, nevertheless, my dear friend, acknowledge," replied Strathern, "that the sweeping censure and unjust suspicions indulged by the lower classes against 'our order' have had their origin in the reckless extravagance of some of its members, entailing, among other evils, the want of power to fulfil engagements thoughtlessly incurred, and by which tradespeople are often greatly injured, and sometimes wholly ruined."

"Pshaw! don't waste your pity on them, my dear fellow: a pack of bloodsuckers who fatten on us. Can you drive out anywhere, within fifty miles of the metropolis, without seeing villas—ay, and mansions, too—the trimness and order of which attract your notice, and induce you to inquire the names of their owners, without discovering them to be the cormorants who have been preying on you in the shape of jewellers, mercers, tailors, hatters, and *id genus omne*, the produce of whose impositions is staring you in the face, in the shape of velvet lawns, green verandaed houses, and picturesque cottages, embosomed in umbrageous shades, as George Robins would say?"

"Indeed, my dear Fitzwarren, you are unjust to the class you describe. I have known many persons of strict probity and honourable sentiments among them."

"Have you, by Jove! Then you have been more fortunate than I have."

"For me, I coincide with Fitzwarren, and *odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu with a disdainful air.

"Has it never occurred to you that the want of punctuality in the payments of those denominated men of fashion has led to the overcharges and imposition of which you complain?" asked Strathern.

"Who the deuce need take care, or indeed can afford to be punctual, when charged half as much again as an article is worth?"

"It is precisely because a tradesman cannot calculate when he is likely to receive the value of the goods he sells, and for which he must pay within a given time, that he is compelled to charge a larger price than if he obtained immediate payment, or even at the end of a year's credit," observed Strathern.

"But if you admit, and you cannot do otherwise, that they commence with charging more than the value, what can you say for their demanding interest after the first year for articles already over-priced, on the consideration of anticipated want of punctuality?"

"I say that perhaps even then they ultimately do not profit as much as if they sold their goods at a less price, for ready money," replied Strathern.

"By Jove, you are a regular advocate for the shopocracy!" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "and, if I

did not know that no *mésalliance* had ever caused the noble blood of the Stratherns to mingle with that of a *parvenu*, I should have suspected that some one of your grandmothers had belonged to the race you so warmly defend."

"Who but Englishmen would pause in such a place," observed Strathern, "to talk of the subject that has just occupied us?—and Fitzwarren, too, who has never been in the Vatican before! Look how the strangers stare at us in astonishment: why, the very *custodii* are smiling at our barbarism!"

"And what care I?" said Fitzwarren. "I much prefer a little rational talk to gazing at statues, the merits of which I don't understand, or gaping up at painted ceilings until I get a stiff neck and a fit of yawning. I have had enough of that work at Florence, where I was bored to death by a stupid fellow of a *laquais de place*, who would insist on taking me to see every gallery in the place, until I wished him and them at the bottom of the sea. Why, this morning when I got up, a Roman fellow, calling himself a *cicerone*, offered to take me a *Giro*. 'You and your *Giro* be hanged,' said I: 'take me to the lodging of my friends:' which he did, turning up his eyes like a duck in thunder at my refusal to stop and examine any of the objects he pointed out."

"Then, *au nom du ciel*," exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "what induced you to come to Rome?"

"A temptation which would induce me to go to the North Pole, if required—a girl, and the very handsomest, too, I ever set my eyes on. A magnificent creature: large in the forehand; capital shoulder; fine

in the legs; neat in the pasterns; sound in the feet; and with such a coat—skin, I mean—as I never before saw. Met her at the English minister's at Florence, at dinner: good fellow that, and gives a capital feed—devilish civil to me. Saw her next evening at Normanby's theatre: devilish fine acting, I assure you, and *he* a first-rate performer; keeps a capital house, and enables one to judge of the merits of his cook by inviting one to dinner frequently. She—the girl, I mean—did not act: all the better. I hate having girls going through love-scenes on the stage; it begets too much familiarity. Wouldn't like to marry a girl who had been playing Juliet to any Romeo but myself; and hang me if I think, even to please the girl of my heart, I could act that love-sick, melancholy swain;" and Fitzwarren burst out into a loud laugh, that attracted the eyes of those near enough to hear it, as the comical notion of his enacting the part of Romeo crossed his mind. "Well," resumed he, "having been regularly presented to her, I thought myself entitled to converse with her when we met. She is as shy as my old mare Fanny—you remember Fanny, don't you? A capital mare I had from Jersey; thorough-bred and fine action. Ah! that *was* an animal."

"The lady, or the mare?" asked Lord Alexander Beaulieu, laughing.

"What a fellow you are, Beaulieu!—the mare, to be sure. I found the girl so shy and distant that I could hardly get a word from her. Strange, wasn't it? for you know that in London the girls and their mothers, too, are monstrous civil to me; too civil by half, I

think sometimes, when they are at Epsom or Ascot, in the stand, and prevent one from making one's bets, or hedging, they are so chatty and so anxious about one's horse winning. Finding she was so reserved, I tried to amuse her by telling her the London news of the last season, with some of our good stories; but—would you believe it?—she never vouchsafed to smile, though you remember how Lady Agnes Mildenard, Lady Sophy Aldenham, and Lady Maria Fordingbridge, used to laugh when I told them. Being determined to conquer her shyness, I went on and mentioned how I disliked seeing sights, gaping at statues and pictures, and looking at churches and ruins; and then I saw her smile; and, by Jove! most beautiful she looked at the moment, showing teeth like pearls; but there was something sly and wicked about her eye, as it fell on me, that made me think she was laughing at me, though I don't know why. I intended to propose for her in the course of a few days, feeling quite certain that I should never find a girl so much to my taste; but judge of my surprise when I discovered, two days after, that she had accompanied her mother to Rome; so off I came in search of her."

"And so, Fitzwarren, you really are in love at last?" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "I thought that only by a paracentesis was your heart to be reached."

"This fair creature has found the way to it, I can tell you," replied Lord Fitzwarren, heaving the first sigh that had ever been heard to come from his broad, fat chest; and so comically did his plump, rosy face look with the grave expression which for a moment it

assumed, that both his companions could not resist laughing.

"You may laugh, but I am caught at last," said Fitzwarren; "and without her so much as saying a civil thing to me, or even smiling at one of my jokes. Isn't it strange? Hang me, if I know how she managed it!"

"Tell us the name of this reserved, if not scornful beauty; there is something peculiarly piquant, I suppose, from the novelty, in finding a woman who takes no pains to attract, and uses no endeavour to retain an admirer. I long to become acquainted with this *rara avis*," observed Strathern.

"For the purpose of cutting me out, I suppose. No, by Jove! you would be too formidable a rival in my way, so I will not present you."

"I will save you that trouble," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "for I have not only divined the name of the lady of your love, but I have had the happiness of being made known to her."

"The devil you have! why, she has been but two days at Rome. But you are only trying to get at her name. I see it all. You don't know her."

"You will perhaps credit my assertion when I mention the name, which is no other than Miss Sydney, the daughter and heiress of the late Ferdinand Sydney, Esq., of Sydney Court, in Yorkshire."

"That is the name, I admit. But see, Strathern, what a fellow Beaulieu is. He has already found out that she is an heiress, while I was wholly ignorant, and perfectly careless of the matter. I really believe that if Venus herself could appear before him, he

would inquire what is her 'fortune and expectations?' As you know so much about her, probably you are acquainted with her abode?"

"Perfectly. She is at Serny's, in the Piazza d'Espagna."

"Then I'll be off, to pay my visit there:" and, rapidly turning from his companions, Lord Fitzwarren quitted the gallery of the Vatican, without looking at a single one of the treasures it contained, or even at the place itself.

CHAPTER IV.

O, Rome! still glorious in thy fallen state,
Proud trophy of the power of Time and Fate;
Thy ruins are more eloquent than all
That ever gifted orators let fall,
To prove the nothingness of pride and fame,
When nought is left thee, save thy mighty name.

In the Corso, some hours after, Strathern encountered Fitzwarren, whose countenance wore an expression of discontent very unusual to its general character.

"Where do you dine?" were the first words he uttered.

"I have no engagement," was the reply.

"Well, then, let us dine together. Do, Strathern, take pity on a poor devil wholly out of his element, and already fit to hang himself."

"Come and dine at my hotel, and meet Beaulieu."

"Agreed. I almost wish I had come to Rome. It is no place for me."

"Why, being at Rome, do you not do as those at Rome do? Why not see those objects that attract travellers from every country here? Even Beaulieu takes an interest in them, though not more addicted to the study of antiquarian lore than yourself."

"He affects to take an interest in them merely to be able to prate about them when he returns to England, and make believe that he understands something about them; but *I* am no humbug, and can no more go about, led by a *laquais de place*, or a cicerone, staring at things I don't care a rush about, than I could pretend to impose on people by talking of them when I return home. No, Rome is no place for me. Why, would you believe it? when I asked to be taken to the horse-dealers' stables, to amuse myself by looking at their nags, my fellow took me to a filthy lane, the odour of which was insupportable, and into stables which might be compared to the Augean ones assigned to Hercules to cleanse: you see I have not forgotten school. There I saw some eight or ten such brutes as I never before beheld. I had a few trotted out for the fun of the thing, and, by Jove! their action quite equalled their appearance. The breed has changed but little since the time of the ancients, for these horses are as like some of the *bas relievii* I saw at the Vatican, the only thing I looked at there, as if the marble was copied from them. Great clumsy brutes, with heads like rams, heavy, and slow in their paces, and, when put in a quick movement, looking as if they were galloping after their own heads. I would not ride one of them on any consideration; and when I said so, the fellows in the stable were mightily offended. So here I am, like a fish out of water. At Florence, Normanby lent me a clever nag of his every day. He has a stable full of capital ones, so I got on very well; but here what am I to do? And I endure all this for a girl who refused to admit me when I called at her door. I

guessed she was at home, though the servant denied her; and five minutes after I left the house I saw her carriage come to it, and she and her mother step in and drive off. How unlike the Wellerby girls, who, the moment they espied me passing the window of their hotel, began kissing their hands, and beckoning me to come to them."

"The Wellerby girls, as you so unceremoniously designate them, are not remarkable for their reserve. *Au contraire*, they seem to think that they have a right to seize on every unmarried man of fortune who comes to Rome, and try their skill in engrossing his attentions. I advise you, therefore, Fitzwarren, to beware of man-traps set there."

"Thanks for your counsel, my dear fellow, but I am an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff, and she must, indeed, be a sharp one who can take me in. Why, the very reason this girl I am so cursedly in love with captivated me, was, that I saw from the first she did not take the slightest pains to please me. If she had, I am such a knowing chap that, ten to one, I would not have taken such a desperate fancy to her. You don't know, Strathern, what a deep hand I am."

"I confess I did not give you credit for being so much on your guard."

"But I am, though; you should see me when girls are doing all they can to catch me. I remain as cool as a cucumber, by Jove, I do! Contradict them merely to show 'em I am not to be had, and laugh when they talk sentiment. They'll not make a fool of me, I can tell 'em. But this girl, she is quite

another sort of thing. I cannot get her out of my head."

"Your heart, you mean; for in love, it is said, the head has very little to do in the matter."

"Head or heart, all I know is, that I never before felt so miserable in all my life. You may laugh, Strathern, but hang me if it isn't true. What can be more vexatious than to be one's own master, with a large fortune, and yet not be able to gain possession of the only thing I desire? I who have hitherto never had a single wish ungratified."

"Your wishes, probably, have heretofore been confined to pleasures easily attained by wealth."

"Yes, and I wish I had now no other, for it maddens me to think that all my fortune would be unavailing to win the only girl I ever really cared about."

"With this conviction, abandon the pursuit, and turn your thoughts to other objects."

"This is much more easily said than done, my good fellow. Why, I can think of nothing else. She is always running in my head, just as my beautiful mare Fanny used to be before I was able to buy her. You'll laugh at me when I tell you that for weeks I could hardly bring myself to look at any other horse, though the dealers were every day trying to tempt me with their primest nags; and so wholly had I set my heart on having Fanny, that I would have given five times the sum I paid for her, large as it was, rather than not have her. Once I have set my mind on a thing, I can't bear being baulked, and people find this out, and take advantage of it."

"But, being aware of this, why do you not exercise some degree of self-control?"

"That is, talk or reason myself out of what I wish for, or else determine to pay only a fair price for it. No, Strathern, life is too short for those who have plenty of money to deny themselves anything that it can purchase. This is my maxim, and the only rule I follow."

"I cannot compliment you on it, for it is founded wholly in selfishness; and wealth was given us for better purposes than mere self-indulgence. Think, Fitzwarren, of all the good you might effect with a portion only of the money you expend for your personal gratifications."

"And do you not expend as large sums in yours? What is the difference, whether I spend my money on horses, hounds, and other pleasures, or, as you do, on pictures, statues, books, and such like? I can see none, and my motto is, every man to his fancy."

"Yet the results are very different. By encouraging painters, sculptors, and literature, I advance the fine arts, and give employment to those who have devoted their lives to the study of them. This is highly advantageous to my country, and tends to promote its interests."

"And do I not encourage the breed of horses and dogs, by giving enormous prices for them, and afford employment to grooms, helpers, and keepers, by the large stud of nags in my stables? I can see no reason why my money is not as laudably expended as yours is, though in a different way; ay, and more so, for by mine I encourage the agricultural interest of England

by increasing the demand for hay and corn, while your pictures, statues, and books consume none. What can you say to this, my good fellow? Have I not given you a pozer? I am no fool, I can tell you, and have studied the matter more deeply than you think. What has old England ever been famous for? said I to myself. For fine horses, racing, and sport, to be sure. What has rendered her superior to the whole world? Why, her horses have. Well, then, he who keeps the greatest number of these noble animals, and encourages racing and hunting, is the truest patriot, and the best friend to the agricultural interest. Live and let live, say I. I quarrel with no man's taste. You like pictures and statues, I don't; for every day I go out hunting or shooting in England I can see nature, which pleases me more than all the landscapes ever painted. Are brown and yellow trees on canvass, with dark glossy ground and ruined temples, and rivers half green and blue, to be compared to our fresh fields, fine old trees, comfortable farm-houses, and glassy rivers? Can any statues be compared to good flesh and blood? Not any that I ever saw. What can you say against this, Strathern?"

Strathern smiled at the triumphant air of Fitzwarren; but, feeling how useless any of the arguments he could adduce would prove to change his opinion, he declined prolonging the argument, and left his friend master of the field.

"Now Strathern was reckoned one of the cleverest fellows at college," said Lord Fitzwarren to himself, as he walked to his hotel, "yet I had infinitely the best of the argument with him. I did not leave him a

word to say—no, not a single word. Hang me, if I don't begin to speak in the House of Lords when I get back! I had no notion I had such a knack until I pozed Strathern. Yes, I'll make a figure in the House. Agricultural interest and agricultural distress are always popular words in a speech. They sound well, and read well in the papers. This will make me more liked than ever by the farmers, and render them doubly anxious to preserve the game and the foxes. By Jove! it's a famous notion. I wonder it never came into my head before. How pleasant it will be to have the House crying 'Hear!' 'Hear!' 'Hear!' as I come out with my opinions. I'll say, 'I have reflected long and deeply on the cause of distress in the country.' One must always take credit for having reflected long and deeply, though I dare be sworn the most of the lords have done so as little as I have. Then I'll add, 'I have studied the condition of other countries.' That sounds well; but I won't add, 'by sleeping comfortably in my carriage while travelling, and living wholly with the English abroad.' Yes, I'll get up a speech, I'm determined on it, and astonish the natives when I get back."

The evening of that day Strathern met Miss Sydney and her mother at a small party given by Lady Monthermer, and, at his request, was presented to them. The rare beauty of the young lady attracted, and the calm self-possession of her manner, so unlike those of the generality of the young women he was accustomed to meet, impressed him greatly in her favour. Her mother, a mild and dignified woman, who still retained the traces of no ordinary beauty,

differed greatly from the husband-seeking matrons around her, whose civilities towards bachelors of fortune were somewhat too marked not to leave room to doubt their being dictated by mere politeness. When Lord Fitzwarren joined the party, Strathern observed that the countenance of Miss Sydney assumed an air of dissatisfaction, which became increased when, after making his bow to the mistress of the house, he quickly approached her with extended hand, seeming wholly unmindful of the propriety of first addressing her mother. No hand met his outstretched one, and the coldness with which his animated salutations were returned might have checked the advances of a less bold man. Mrs. Sydney, whose presence he at length noticed, was scarcely less reserved in her reception of him than her beautiful daughter had been; nevertheless, he seemed determined to stay near them, addressing his conversation exclusively to the young lady.

"I never was more surprised than when I learned that you had left Florence," said Fitzwarren.

"I know not why you should be so," observed Miss Sydney, with *Glacial* coldness.

"You never told me you intended coming to Rome."

"Our acquaintance was so slight, that I saw no necessity for making you acquainted with our movements."

"That was very ill-natured on your part. The moment, however, I heard you were gone, I determined on seeing Rome also, and now that I am here, I hope we shall meet every day."

The young lady drew up her snowy neck, and looked more disdainful than Strathern thought so beautiful a face could look. Meanwhile several young girls, and some no longer youthful, were casting friendly glances at Fitzwarren, whose eyes were fixed on the only woman in the room who would have shunned them, had she the power, and who was evidently much annoyed by his attention.

"I called at your door this morning," said Fitzwarren, "and was very much disappointed at not finding you at home. To-morrow I hope to be more fortunate."

"My mother and I seldom receive morning visitors."

"You will, I trust, allow me to be one of the few admitted. Pray do; for I have something to say which is of importance."

"You must excuse me, my Lord, and permit me to add, that you can have no communication to make that can be of the least importance to me."

"Why how can you tell, until you know what it is?"

"I am so totally uninterested in any communication coming from a person who is almost a stranger to me, that I must request you to excuse my hearing it."

Miss Sydney turned from her tormentor, and began conversing in French with her mother.

Strathern now ventured to address Mrs. Sydney, and his respectful manner offering so striking and agreeable a contrast to the free and easy one of Lord Fitzwarren, impressed her in his favour, and induced her to listen with interest to his conversation. They

spoke of Rome, and the objects so worthy of attention which it contains. Mrs. Sydney's was a highly cultivated mind, well prepared for the contemplation of the classic ruins with which the Eternal City abounds, and for the study of the glorious works of art so calculated to charm a person of fine taste. In Strathern she found a scholar without pedantry—a fine gentleman in the true acceptation of the word, namely, a highly-bred and polite man, equally free from conceit or affectation, as from self-complacency or familiarity, the besetting sins of the young men of the present day. Miss Sydney listened, rather than joined, in the conversation, though it was evident she took a lively interest in it, and the few observations which she made evinced such a knowledge of the subject treated of, as led Strathern to judge very favourably of her intellect and fine taste. But even had she not spoken, hers was so eloquent a countenance, that he must have been a poor physiognomist who could look on its varying expression, while she listened to the conversation carrying on, without being convinced that hers was no ordinary mind. The daughter of such a mother, thought Strathern, could not be otherwise than intellectual; and he was right, for Mrs. Sydney had assiduously cultivated the fertile mind of her lovely daughter, no less by bestowing on her the best education, than by conversing with her ever since her girlhood, on topics selected for conveying instruction, and instilling high principles.

Left a widow while still in the prime of life, and in the possession of personal attractions, and a dowry, which, even had they been much less remarkable,

might have insured her many suitors, Mrs. Sydney had devoted herself wholly to the care of her only child, and, true to the memory of a husband fondly beloved and deeply lamented, declined ever giving him a successor in her affections. Her child was *all* to her, and the happiness she could no longer hope to obtain for herself on earth, she looked forward to see her daughter enjoy when grown to womanhood, and consigned to a husband worthy of her. And well did Louisa Sydney repay her doting mother's care, and return her affection. It was, in truth, a pleasant sight to behold the mother and daughter together. The one still fair, touched, but not faded by sorrow, which, more than time, had given that grave cast to a countenance so delicately feminine, that without it she might still have rivalled many a matronly belle of her circle who had not ceased to achieve conquests. The style of dress, too, adopted by Mrs. Sydney, if it made her not look older than she actually was, at least added to the general character of grave dignity which marked her appearance. Louisa Sydney resembled her mother greatly. Above the middle height, she was exquisitely formed, and so graceful were all her movements, that they lent a new charm to her beautiful figure. Her face was of that regular oval so seldom seen but in the works of the ancients; and her features, small and perfect, acquired additional beauty from her fair and transparent complexion, and the rich colour of her lips. Her eyes were of a deep blue, with snowy lids, fringed with silken lashes dark as the straight and well-defined brows that spanned them, and made her forehead appear still more white;

her bright brown hair was divided *à la Madonna* on her temples, and bound around her small and finely-shaped head. Her arms, hands, and feet were faultless, and she presented one of those rare and happy examples of perfect beauty, without any portion of the insipidity often said to appertain to it.

It is not to be wondered at that, with such charms, Louisa Sydney was an object of universal attraction wherever she moved; but, unlike the generality of acknowledged beauties, she appeared as unconscious of her superiority, as of the effects it produced on others. This very unusual unconsciousness, while it precluded vanity, rendered her less indulgent to the admirers attracted by her charms; and, when finding they continued their unwelcomed attentions, notwithstanding the discouragement on her part, there was a coldness almost amounting to sternness in her manner of repelling their troublesome assiduities.

"I fear your admirers will accuse you of rudeness, my dear child," would Mrs. Sydney say to her daughter.

"As long as they cannot accuse me of encouraging their addresses, I shall not care; but really, dearest mother, they seem to presume on our unprotected situation, by the continuance of attentions which they cannot avoid seeing are disagreeable to me, and appear so confident that they must please me, that I cannot resist showing them how great is their error."

"I think, dearest, you might check their advances without betraying any petulance."

"And so I endeavour to do, but some of these men

are so vain and confident of their claims to command success, that they provoke me into a sentiment very nearly approaching to anger; and I have not yet acquired sufficient self-control to suppress its symptoms."

Strathern left the party at Lady Monthermer's, thinking more of Miss Sydney than he had ever previously done of any woman, and wondering how Lord Fitzwarren could imagine that so refined and gifted a being could be pleased with his attentions. While he sat at breakfast the next morning, perusing the *Diario di Roma*, Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered. "Do you know, my dear Strathern," said he, after some desultory conversation, "that I am half disposed to turn my thoughts towards the heiress. I hear she has a very large fortune, and to a *cadet de famille* such a wife would be very acceptable. The girl is, I must admit, remarkably beautiful, which is another advantage, for it would preclude any of the spiteful remarks so prevalent in our *cliques* at home when a man marries an heiress."

"To whom do you allude?" asked Strathern, wholly forgetful of the fact of Miss Sydney being one, so little importance did he attach to that circumstance which has so great an influence with the generality of men.

"To Miss Sydney, to be sure," replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "She evidently discourages the attentions of Fitzwarren, which cannot be wondered at, for poor Fitz, though a devilish good sort of fellow, is more fit for his club than for a drawing-room, and

more capable of winning the brush at a fox-chase, than the heart of a young and lovely girl like the one in question, and moreover, an heiress."

"Miss Sydney is certainly a very superior person," observed Strathern, "and I agree with you that our friend does not appear to have much chance of making himself acceptable to her."

"I did not pay her any attention last night," resumed Beaulieu, assuming a careless air, "for I thought it best to let her see the *empressement* with which all the other English girls have accepted my civilities. Nothing raises a man so much in the estimation of women as to see him made a fuss of by their own sex, and we certainly have here at present girls who are willing to flirt even with a younger brother rather than not flirt at all. She must have seen last night how *recherché* I am, and that must have made a favourable impression. Yes, I will think of it, and, though a French philosopher has said that marriage may be sometimes convenient, but is never delightful, a truth which so many of our Benedicts at home admit, I would not hesitate to gulp down the pill, provided it is well gilded."

Strathern could have found it in his heart to have knocked the coxcomb down, while, contemplating his image in a large mirror and arranging his hair, this speech was uttered, so indignant did he feel that Miss Sydney could be thus lightly spoken of. In a few minutes after Lord Fitzwarren entered the room.

"Well, Fitz, how goes on your love affair?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu, a supercilious smile playing over his face.

"Hang me if I know what to make of the girl!" replied Lord Fitzwarren. "She was positively uncivil to me last night, wasn't she, Strathern? and yet I cannot get her out of my head. I feel about her just as I used to do about horses—the more wicked and shy they were, the fonder I was of them. There was Fanny, always shying, kicking, and plunging—threw me twice, and nearly broke my leg, yet I couldn't bear to sell her, and liked her all the better for her defects. So it is with this girl, the more proud and insolent she is, the more infatuated I am about her, and hang me if I can help it."

"The mother seems as stately and reserved as the daughter," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Who cares about the mother?" said Fitzwarren. "One doesn't want to marry her."

"What jointure has she?" asked Lord Alexander.

"Are you thinking of proposing to her?" said Fitzwarren. "Only think, Strathern, having Axy Beaulieu for a father-in-law. By Jove, it would be capital fun! Well, you shall have my support, I promise you, and really, now that I reflect on it, the widow is still a devilish fine woman, and does not look above six and thirty."

"What say you to marrying her yourself, Fitz, when the daughter rejects you, for reject you I am positive she will."

"I'll bet you a cool hundred she doesn't."

"Make it five, and I'll take you."

"Done; five let it be."

"Yes, but mind you must regularly pop the

question. No bubble bet—for, if *you* don't propose, she can't refuse."

"What a knowing hand Axy is! Always suspicious, always afraid of being done."

Strathern arose, rang for his carriage, and, disgusted with both his *soi-disant* friends, left them, and proceeded to visit the *atelier* of an English sculptor engaged in a work for him. On entering, the first persons he met were Mrs. Sydney and her daughter; and the dignified and graceful demeanour of both ladies made him feel still more indignant towards the two men he had so lately heard calculating, nay, betting, on the chance of being accepted as the husband of one, and jesting on the subject of the other. The mild and amiable greeting of the mother was more congenial to his feelings than the cold and reserved recognition accorded to him by the daughter. This reserve operated as a check to prevent his endeavouring to make himself agreeable to the young lady, so he addressed his conversation chiefly to her mother, and was rewarded by Mrs. Sydney's listening with interest to his opinions on art, and expressing her coincidence with most of them. Lady Wellerby and her daughters soon after entered the studio.

"Well met, Mrs. Sydney," said the former. "We have just left our cards and a note at your door, to request you and Miss Sydney to come to us to-morrow evening."

The invitations accepted, Lady Wellerby turned to Strathern, and exclaimed:—

"Ah! truant; so I have caught you at last. Where have you been hiding yourself? We have been to all

the artists to admire the beautiful works they are executing for you, and came here to look at the Nymph ; do, pray, Mr. Gibson, let me see it."

From the moment that the statue was uncovered, Lady Wellerby and her daughters were loud in their praises of it. "Beautiful!" "Exquisite!" "Charming!" "So graceful!" "So original!" were uttered alternately by these ladies, while Mrs. Sydney and her daughter stood in mute admiration, much more flattering to the sculptor, as well as to the owner of the statue, than the affected enthusiasm displayed by the others.

"It is indeed admirable," said Mrs. Sydney, after a long pause.

"Yes," murmured her lovely daughter.

And Strathern felt that never before had he heard that monosyllable so sweetly pronounced.

"Ah! Mr. Gibson, I see you have profited by our frequent visits to your studio," said Lady Wellerby.

The sculptor looked puzzled, and began to express his ignorance of her ladyship's precise meaning.

"Don't deny it ; I am not at all displeased. You did quite right ; there is nothing like having nature to copy from."

"I really do not comprehend your ladyship."

"Why, it is as plain as possible that my daughter, Lady Olivia, has furnished a model, and realised your *beau ideal* for this charming Nymph. It is as like as possible — the same turn of the head, the unaffected ease of the attitude, the expression of countenance, and, above all, the exact resemblance of the face and bust ; yes, it is the very image. I appeal to Mr. Strathern. Don't you think the likeness striking?"

"I cannot say it occurred to me," replied Strathern.

"Nor to me," observed Lady Sophia Wellerby. "Why, Olivia has a long, thin face, and a....."

"I beg I may not be made the subject of your personal remarks," said the Lady Olivia, blushing with anger at the evident intention of her sister to depreciate her attractions, but feeling no shame at her mother's folly in making, or rather in affecting to make, the discovery of the likeness where not a trace could be really found.

"Olivia is so free from vanity, that she shrinks from anything that may be construed into a compliment," whispered Lady Wellerby to Strathern and Mrs. Sydney; "but, really, it is strange," continued she aloud, "that in all the works executed for Mr. Strathern I can trace a remarkable likeness to both my girls; and, although the sculptors deny having had the intention of taking them for models, I nevertheless cannot divest myself of the notion that, seeing them so frequently in their studios, they may have, perhaps involuntarily, copied, if not all, at least a considerable portion of their works from my daughters. The arms and hands of Mr. Westmacott's charming statue appear really to be *fac-similes* of Sophia's, and the head strikingly resembles Olivia."

Lord Fitzwarren now entered the *atelier*, bluntly saying he only came in because he saw Strathern's carriage at the door, and, not knowing what to do with himself, wished to be told where to go.

"You are come in time to decide whether I am right or wrong in asserting that this statue bears a strong resemblance to Lady Olivia," said Lady Wellerby.

"Lady Olivia!" exclaimed Fitzwarren. "Not the slightest — not the least; no more like than my mare Fanny is to Taglioni, Dullington's favourite mare. This statue looks like a regular thoroughbred creature —small bone, high condition, fine head, well put on; and Lady Olivia's head is large, and she is ewe-necked, and....."

"Reserve your comparisons for the stables or horse-dealer's yard, my dear Fitzwarren," said Strathern, interrupting the catalogue of defects which he felt certain his friend was about to utter, and pitying the evident dismay of the poor girl on whom her mother's folly was about to draw this punishment.

"By Jove! I wish I had brought some of my favourite horses here," resumed Fitzwarren, nothing embarrassed at the timely interruption to his former rude speech. "I should like of all things to have them copied in marble by this gentleman," turning round and nodding to Mr. Gibson. "Hang me, if I shouldn't like to build a large gallery at my place, and have my favourite horses in marble ranged down each side of it, with my stud-grooms, in their stable dress, standing near them, and my dogs too. It would please me much more than the gallery my grandfather built and filled with statues, some of them patched and mended, which he gave a mint of money for at Rome."

"You are a perfect original, Lord Fitzwarren," lisped the Lady Sophia Wellerby, with a most winning smile.

"And you a good copy," was the blunt answer.

"Of whom, or of what?" asked the young lady;

but, luckily, before an answer could be given, and the chances were that it would not be a flattering one, Mrs. Sydney and her daughter moved to depart, and Lord Fitzwarren rushed to offer his assistance to hand them to their carriage. Strathern, however, was before him, and, while he gave his arm to Mrs. Sydney, he overheard her lovely daughter decline the offered one of Fitzwarren.

"What have I done that you are always so uncivil to me?" said the peer.

"If you think me uncivil, why offer your attentions?" replied the young lady.

"Because I can't help it," said he; "but do tell me why you are uncivil?"

"I will be as unceremonious as yourself, and confess that I wish to discourage attentions that are disagreeable to me."

"But, tell me, do, for God's sake, how I can make myself less disagreeable to you?"

"By avoiding me." And here further parley was prevented by the young lady entering her carriage, into which Strathern had just handed her mother; and Fitzwarren, with a most rueful countenance, was left looking after the vehicle as it drove off, so engrossed by reflections on his slighted passion, that Strathern had thrice slapped him on the shoulder ere he was aroused from his reverie.

"Yes," said he, "I begin to think that Axy Beaulieu will win my five hundred if I pop the question, for I never saw a girl so obstinate and ill-natured. I wish I could get her out of my head; but, hang me! the more I try the less I succeed. Here comes that

fellow, Beaulieu. Don't tell him that my chance looks so bad, for he'd crow over me. I must try to get up another bet with him as a hedge; but he's such a knowing one, that I must look sharp, or he will take me in."

CHAPTER V.

O, Sympathy! thou choicest gift of Heaven,
The bond to knit true hearts, in mercy given
To soothe the ills that e'er on mortals wait,
And yield a balm for all the ills of fate.
Without thee what is life? A dreary waste
Where only brief and empty joys we taste;
Still pining some companion soul to find
With tastes harmonious and congenial mind,
Where thought meets thought, as e'en in mirrors we
Reflected back our own resemblance see.

"I like Mr. Strathern exceedingly," observed Mrs. Sydney to her daughter, as they sat together in her drawing-room after dinner on the day that they had met our hero at the studio of Mr. Gibson.

"Yes, he appears agreeable and well-bred," was the reply. "Nevertheless, after what Lord Alexander Beaulieu said about his fancying that every unmarried woman who is only commonly civil has designs on him, I confess I feel no desire to administer to his vanity by evincing any wish of cultivating his acquaintance."

"Beware, my dear Louisa, of betraying a pertinacity in avoiding it," said Mrs. Sydney, "for *that*

would be almost as flattering to a vain man as if you showed a desire to know him. But, notwithstanding Lord Alexander Beaulieu's report, I am not disposed to think Mr. Strathern a vain man. Handsome men are rarely so, and you must admit that he is remarkably good-looking."

"Yes, he is well enough," replied Miss Sydney.

"Well enough! Why, my dear child, that is just the term one would apply to Lord Alexander Beaulieu's looks, but it surely is not the one to designate so distinguished and handsome a man as Mr. Strathern."

"He does not strike me as being so remarkably handsome," observed the fair Louisa; but a blush which rose to her cheek might have betrayed, had her mother noticed it, her consciousness of being disingenuous for the first time in her life.

"I see you are prejudiced against him, my child," said the unsuspicious mother, "and I am sorry that you allow yourself to be so. Do not take for granted all that you hear reported in society. You know not the misrepresentations—sometimes unintentional, and more frequently the reverse—made by persons to influence others against those of whom they are envious, or to whom they entertain a dislike."

"But surely Lord Alexander Beaulieu would not be guilty of the meanness of telling a falsehood, and he positively did assert that Mr. Strathern believed every woman who said a civil word to be in love with him."

"There are some persons, and I am inclined to think that Lord Alexander Beaulieu is among the

number, who are prone to colour their impressions so highly that they state for fact that which they only suspect. I have heard him more than once describe some of his acquaintances known to me so differently from what they really are, that I should be very cautious how I accorded credence to his reports."

Louisa Sydney was not sorry to hear her mother, for whose judgment she entertained a great respect, throw doubts on the truth of Lord Alexander Beaulieu's statement, for it was painful to her to think that a man who seemed in every other respect so superior should have the unpardonable vanity ascribed to him by his *soi-disant* friend—a vanity, above all others, the least likely to find favour in the eyes of a high-minded woman of delicacy. She, however, made no farther remark, and Mrs. Sydney let the subject drop.

At Lady Wellerby's, the next evening, Strathern met Mrs. and Miss Sydney, and again devoted the greater portion of the evening to conversing with them. His admiration for Louisa increased every hour, but, had he not been attracted towards *her*, the charm of her mother's conversation would have led him to prefer her society to that of any other woman in Rome, while she, finding him the most rational and agreeable man in their circle, was glad to escape the trite and common-place chat of the other young men by conversing with him.

With the generality of the English ladies then in the Eternal City, Mrs. Sydney had but little sympathy. They, for the greater part, consisted of match-making mothers, looking out for rich bachelors, in the hope of converting them into Benedicts—women of

fashion, whose pursuits and occupations were so precisely the same in Rome as in London, that it seemed unaccountable why they should have journeyed so far to follow the same routine of crowded *soirées* and nightly rubbers of whist as at home. Other ladies there were whose amusements were even of a less innocent nature—women whose sole pleasure consisted in being admired, and in exciting the envy of rival *belles*. Their flirtations furnished topics to the ill-natured portion of the society in which they moved, and speculations as to the extent to which these flirtations were carried. How would they, thoughtless and imprudent as they were, have shrunk with dismay, could they but have heard even a tenth part of the scandalous suspicions and injurious assertions to which the levity of their conduct gave rise !—but they heard only the insidious flatteries of their artful admirers, who, bent on exhibiting them as their conquests, cared little how the reputations of those ladies to whom they paid such marked attentions suffered, provided their own vanity was gratified by the display of their triumphs.

Sometimes a diversity was afforded by the presence of Russian nobles, with unpronounceable names, and fair wives sparkling in jewels, greatly enjoying the temporary liberty accorded to them by their paternal sovereign, who likes his subjects so well that he seldom permits them to be long absent from his sight. It was pleasant to see them basking in the sunshine of Italy, enjoying it as only the inhabitants of the cold region whence they came can, but always taking care to assure those with whom they conversed, that Russia

was by no means a bad climate, and that the Emperor was, as every faithful subject is in duty bound to think, the perfection of human nature. Germans, too, mingled in the crowd of strangers sojourning at Rome, and might easily be recognised by the gravity and earnestness which characterises that thinking people. They examined and reflected on all the objects most worthy of attention, and lived more in the past than the actual present. They were much prone to refer at night to the sights that had most interested them during the *gires* of the day, their imaginations being filled with the thoughts they awakened. But they found few of any other nation ready to converse with them on such topics, all allusion to antiquity being, by fashionable society at Rome, voted a bore, and those who talked of it were soon avoided. The Parisian visitants at Rome were as well-dressed and as lively as if in their own gay capital—setting the *modes* to the rest of the *beau monde*, and fully conscious of the importance of a toilette *sans reproche*. A *bas bleu* might sometimes be seen, who bestowed on the inane circle of *haut ton* the knowledge acquired from her *laquais de place* or guide-book; and groups might be met of the most estimable, though not the most agreeable, portion of society, the unsophisticated wives and daughters of English country gentlemen, tempted to roam by the supercilious airs assumed over them in their own rural neighbourhoods by the travelled lords and ladies, who prated about Italy as familiarly as if they talked of the next village in their own county, and appeared to despise those who had not seen it.

Mrs. Sydney could sometimes scarcely forbear a smile, as she beheld some large and unwieldy matron, dressed in the obsolete mode of three years gone by, linked to the arm of a husband as obese as herself, his shining bald head encircled by a few stray locks of silvery hue, and his deeply-coloured red cheeks protruding from his snowy cravat—reminding one of a lobster in its shell served on a damask napkin—shouldering their way to the mistress of the *fête*, followed by their daughters, likewise linked arm-in-arm, all and each evidently alarmed and embarrassed.

In such an incongruous society, it was no wonder that Mrs. Sydney was glad to find a well-educated and refined man like Strathern, with whom she could converse of the sights seen in the morning, or those to be visited on the morrow.

And now Strathern asked and obtained permission to call on her, and sometimes to accompany her in her tour of sight-seeing, and glad was he to observe that by degrees the reserve of Miss Sydney, amounting on their first acquaintance almost to avoidance, wore off, and she would take a part in the conversation, revealing, while she did so, a very superior mind, in the cultivation of which nothing that could inform, strengthen, or enliven it, had been neglected. But though her reserve diminished, her manner towards Strathern was widely different from that of the other unmarried ladies of his acquaintance, and the most vain man must have owned that it held out little encouragement for his paying more marked attention. The pleasure he found in a society so congenial to his taste as that of Mrs. Sydney and her lovely daughter

was often alloyed by the presence of Lord Fitzwarren, who, despite of all the coldness of the mother and undisguised dislike of the daughter, continued to obtrude himself upon them whenever an opportunity offered. He haunted their paths, following them in all their *girós*, and hovering near them at every evening party with a pertinacity most annoying to them both, and equally so to Strathern. In vain did the latter remonstrate on the impropriety of continuing attentions evidently unwelcome to the object of them. Fitzwarren would say in answer to such representations,

"Faint heart never won fair lady. Who knows but in time I may conquer her repugnance; and only think what a triumph it would be to me if I were at once to carry off this fair prize, and win Axy Beaulieu's five hundred into the bargain!"

"Be assured you will do neither, Fitzwarren, and I, as your friend, tell you so."

"Has she authorized you to make this communication?"

"No; I cannot say she has."

"Then how do you know that I have no chance?"

"I judge so from her evident avoidance of you, which you also must have observed."

"That goes for nothing. One must never mind woman's frowns or coldness; both are often only assumed, and many of the sex have been known to smile on those they least care for, and frown on those to whom they are not indifferent. Women are like horses, you never can tell what to make of them. Why, I have had nags that would prick up their ears

and look vicious whenever I approached them, yet they never attempted to kick or bite *me*, while they looked as mild as lambs when strangers entered the stable, but nevertheless tried to injure them. Such may be the case with this girl."

"I think you are mistaken in this instance, Fitzwarren, and that you have no right to annoy Miss Sydney."

"Annoy her! Why, what woman was ever annoyed by seeing a man desperately in love with her? Ah! you don't know the sex as well as I do, Strathern; if you did, you would think differently."

"My knowledge of women of refined minds and habits—and Mrs. and Miss Sydney are surely among the most distinguished of this class—enables me to judge that the line of conduct you pursue in tormenting a young lady who has never, even by your own showing, vouchsafed you the least encouragement, is not calculated to elevate you in her estimation, or in that of those who witness it."

"But why should not Miss Sydney be as civil to me as to you?"

"Because I have never presumed to pay her any more marked attention than that respectful courtesy which is due from every well-bred man to a woman."

"That is, you are not in love with her, and I am."

Strathern felt the blood mount to his cheek at this observation, for he was already conscious that Miss Sydney had excited in his breast an interest never previously experienced by him for any of her sex. He was glad that Fitzwarren had not noticed his momentary embarrassment; and he again essayed to convince

his obtuse friend of the impropriety of continuing a pursuit that could lead only to disappointment.

"But," interrupted Fitzwarren, "had you, like me, fallen in love with Miss Sydney, what would you have done?"

"I would have confined myself to a distant and respectful manner towards her, until I had so far cultivated her acquaintance as to be enabled to judge from her behaviour to me whether any more marked attentions on my part would or would not be acceptable."

"And so give some other fellow the time to step in and cut you out. No, no, I am not such a fool. Consider also that, besides my liking the girl, which I really do, I have five hundred pounds at stake."

"To name such a consideration with reference to Miss Sydney is really unworthy, and, to have made or accepted a wager on such a subject, is still more so."

"You have your notions on this point, and I have mine," said Fitzwarren, half offended with his friend; and, turning on his heel, he left him, affecting to show his indifference to his advice by humming a tune.

"Yes," said Strathern, when he found himself alone, "this lovely girl has made so deep an impression on my heart, that if she rejects its homage, it will be long, if ever, before I recover the happy freedom I enjoyed before I knew her. And yet what is the happiness of freedom in comparison with the love of such a woman, could I but hope to win her? But her reserve, her coldness, do they not prove her more than indifference to me? It is true, she has gradually become less cold, less reserved; nevertheless, however

closely I may scrutinize her manner towards me, I cannot flatter myself into the belief that I stand higher in her estimation than any other of the herd of admirers who hover around her, unless it be Fitzwarren, for whom I see she entertains a positive dislike. Could I but hope to conciliate her regard, to vanquish that stately reserve, which, though diminished, still so often chills me, how happy should I be!"

Urged on by this hope, Strathern left nothing undone to please both mother and daughter, yet carefully avoiding to reveal the deep interest he felt in the success of his efforts, until assured that an avowal of his sentiments would not be ill received. He hoped much, but he feared more; and, though in him was exemplified the truth of the verse—

> "None without hope e'er lov'd the brightest fair,
> For love will hope where reason would despair;"

yet, so timid was he, as all true lovers are, that he mistrusted his own good qualities, both personal and mental, being worthy to secure for him the prize he sought.

Society at Rome is so constituted that the members of that called, *par excellence*, *la plus haute*, are in the daily and nightly habit of meeting. They encounter each other in the Vatican, St. Peter's, the artists' studios, on the Monte Pincio, and in the Villa Borghese. These frequent encounters, after some lapse of time, tend to establish a footing of familiarity that it would take an acquaintance of years to bring about in London, where so many different cliques exist, each and all with their separate and united claims on the attention of their votaries.

Strathern blessed the chances thus afforded him of constantly meeting the object of his passion, while he deplored the opportunity furnished also to others to obtrude their attentions on her. Lord Alexander Beaulieu was as unremitting, though less offensive in the mode of evincing his admiration of Miss Sydney, as was Lord Fitzwarren. Better versed in *les bienséances du monde*, and in his knowledge of women, he did not persecute Miss Sydney by his engrossing attention, nor *afficher* his aim in seeking her society. When questioned by Fitzwarren as to the motive which drew him so often near that young lady, he would laughingly declare that he only went for the purpose of watching his chance of winning the wager of five hundred. Strathern was too quick-sighted to be imposed on by this excuse, made in his presence; for he saw that Lord Alexander was exerting every art with which his *savoir faire* furnished him to captivate Miss Sydney, but his assiduities created as little alarm in the heart of the lover as they did interest in that of the lady to whom they were addressed. The same high sense of the perfections of the fair Louisa which led Strathern to doubt the possibility of his own worthiness to win her, made him feel certain that the worldly-minded and commonplace Lord Alexander Beaulieu was not a rival to be dreaded. But Lord Alexander had none of the diffidence that ever attends true love, and marks real merit. His perseverance, however, in vain attempts to render himself agreeable to Miss Sydney only served to increase her coldness towards him, while his not having yet made her an offer of his hand precluded her from

positively dismissing him from the train of suitors, which, like those of the famed Penelope, increased daily, lured on less by her charms than by the fortune which she was reputed to possess. The extent of this train greatly mortified the spinsters of her acquaintance and their mammas, and excited in their breasts no slight degree of envy and dislike towards the lovely and amiable girl, who would gladly have dispensed with attentions absolutely irksome to her, and which her good sense taught her to estimate at their just value.

"I am sure I cannot see what the men find to admire in Miss Sydney," would the Lady Sophia Wellerby exclaim to her mother and sister.

"Nor I neither," was sure to be the response of Lady Olivia.

"She is very insipid, in my opinion, and there is no decided character in her beauty," would Lady Sophia observe.

"I have no patience with that modern Nimrod, Lord Fitzwarren, who follows her like her shadow, although she vouchsafes not to notice his presence, except by a disdainful glance," the Lady Olivia would remark.

"You forget that Miss Sydney is an heiress, and that circumstance is quite sufficient to explain the homage she receives. Those who may not be much struck with her *beaux yeux* find those of her *cassette* irresistible, and, were she less good-looking than she is, she would be certain of having an equal number of admirers," put in their lady-mother.

"But Mr. Strathern, the fastidious and rich Mr.

Strathern, cannot be suspected of mercenary motives."

"No; nor Lord Fitzwarren, who has so large a fortune that he cannot require hers," replied Lady Olivia.

"Don't imagine that because men are rich they are less desirous to mate them with rich wives," would Lady Wellerby observe. "Money desires to beget money, and there is no man, whatever his wealth may be, who does not wish to see it increased."

"Then, look at Lord Alexander Beaulieu; he, too, is paying his court to the heiress!"

"Poor fellow! probably his *poverty* rather than his *will* consents," and the Lady Olivia deeply sighed at the recollection of certain pressures of the hand given by the said Lord Alexander, some five or six years before, when she had better grounds for the pretensions, still maintained, of a beauty, than at present, and when her ladyship was but little disposed to throw away her time on a younger son, scantily provided with the goods of fortune.

"Oh! it's all fair for younger sons to look out for rich wives, and for portionless girls to endeavour to wed men of fortune," would the mercenary mother say; an opinion which had due weight and influence with her daughters, whose anxiety to act up to her notions on this point led them to adopt a line of conduct in reality well calculated to defeat the end it sought to achieve.

"I foresee," said Lady Wellerby, one morning when her temper, soured by her losses at the card-table the preceding evening, was more than usually irritable, "that this Roman campaign will be followed

by no better results than our winters at Paris and Naples, and our summer at the Baths of Lucca. Your father is as sulky as possible, and swears he will never come abroad again. I lose night after night to that odious Lady Melcombe, or that hateful Mrs. Manvers Royston, who never fail to remind me of the amount of my debts to them until they are paid; and because I asked Lord Wellerby to make me an advance on my next year's pin-money, he absolutely stormed. If you girls could only manage to secure husbands, our end in coming abroad would be accomplished, and your father would be less vexed at the expense we have incurred."

"But what can we do, mamma?" demanded Lady Sophia, in a tone half angry, half plaintive.

"Yes, what are we to do, or, rather, what have we left undone?" exclaimed Lady Olivia.

"Have I not been sentimental with Mr. Strathern, and sprightly with Lord Fitzwarren, until tired beyond measure, by enacting both *rôles?*" resumed Lady Sophia.

"And I," said her sister, "have I not talked of antiques? To enable me to do which, I have bored myself with poring over Heaven only knows how many musty old *tomes*, and learned by rote half the guide-books; and yet Mr. Strathern takes no more interest in my erudite conversation than in my sister's sentimentalities."

"And have I not listened to Lord Fitzwarren's details of his stud, and the superior management of it, with episodes of his favourite mare Fanny, until I have made myself ill by my endeavours to suppress the

yawns he excited; and yet what has all this produced?"

"Do not despair; it may yet accomplish some end," said the wily mother. "I have observed with regret that ever since you discovered that he is wholly engrossed by that insipid girl, Miss Sydney, you have grown cold and careless towards him. This is bad policy, very bad policy indeed. You should, *au contraire*, affect to believe him on the point of marriage with the heiress, by which *ruse* any of the attentions or flatteries you exercise towards him will appear so perfectly disinterested that he cannot suspect a motive, and will feel a friendly disposition for you; and when he is refused by Miss Sydney, as he surely will be, who knows but he may turn for consolation to one of you? I have seen such things happen, by good management, that this would not at all surprise me; so mind what you are about, and don't despair. Another counsel I have to give you is, always praise Miss Sydney in his presence. This will disarm him still more of suspicion, for weak men, and he is one, are always suspicious: whereas any ill-natured comments on her person (and I heard you both indulge in some a few evenings ago with the Oswald girls) will make you appear envious and jealous, and cause him to dislike you."

"But, indeed, mamma, it is scarcely possible to have sufficient self-control to praise the looks of a person whom we think by no means handsome."

"Stuff, nonsense! Don't we every day commend what we really disapprove, and *vice versâ?* Am I not compelled to tell Lady Alice Dunnington that her

dull dinners and *ennuyeuse soirées* are charming, and to thank the deaf and stammering Prince of Hesselwitzer for the honour and pleasure his company has afforded us, when I am almost exhausted by the infliction? If persons living in the *beau monde* are obliged to have recourse to this frequent exercise of self-control demanded by *bienséance*, and practised by every one in a certain circle, without the hope of any greater reward than being considered *bien elevé et aimable*, surely, when so great a prize as a rich and noble husband is in view, it is well worth being attended to. Who ever now-a-days gets a husband—that is to say, one worth having—without the exercise of tact to learn his peculiar tastes, and without adopting them, at least for the time present? What made Lady Maria Leslie risk her neck out hunting three days a-week last winter in Northamptonshire, but to win that rich booby, Mr. Sudley Seymour, who never would have proposed for her had she not affected to be as devoted to the chace as himself? What made that pretty Miss Hunter dance herself nearly into a consumption, but to catch Lord Merridale, who, ever since he returned from Russia, thought or dreamt of nothing but the gallopade? Look at Miss Melville's feats in archery, only practised to aim with unerring dart at the heart of the stupid Sir Henry Ravenshaw; and Lady Fanny Harcourt's indefatigable study of music, in order to accompany that melo-maniac, Mr. Torpichen, in his difficult duets, until she made herself so necessary to him, that he engaged her for a duet through life?"

"But surely, mamma, you don't mean to say that

every man only marries because he is lured into wedlock by some scheming girl, such as you have described?" said Lady Sophia.

"Or," said her sister, "that all those women whom you have named only adopted the pursuits mentioned for the sole purpose of winning husbands?"

"I do positively mean what I have said, and those only who are ignorant of the world would doubt what I have asserted. It is the interest of women to get married, and of men to remain single. Both parties are fully aware of this, and it requires all the tact for which our sex are much more remarkable than the male, to lure these last into the net spread to secure them."

Among the English lately arrived at Rome, Mr. Rhymer made his appearance.

"I left Naples," said he, "because I found the society there insupportable, and here, with a few, a very few, exceptions, I find it equally dull and disagreeable."

"Your presence cannot fail to enliven us," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, winking at one of his friends present.

"I was not aware that there was anything so *very* exhilarating in my appearance," replied Mr. Rhymer, looking daggers at Beaulieu. "I hear, however," resumed he, "that *you* require no enlivening, whatever you may do enlightening, and that you still pursue the fickle Goddess as assiduously in Imperial Rome as in commercial London."

"To which of the fickle goddesses do you refer?—for you know that there are two to whom that term is applicable."

"*You*, I know, court both, so I leave you to guess which I referred to. *A-propos* of goddesses, how is the heiress? I hear that a physician is not more punctual in his visits to a rich patient than you are in yours to Miss Sydney."

"That young lady is, I am happy to say, quite well."

"I am glad, though surprised, to learn it, but hers must be a remarkably good constitution to support all she has to encounter. I always pity heiresses, and more especially when, as in the present case, they are handsome."

"May I inquire why they so peculiarly excite your commiseration?"

"Who would not feel pity to see a poor girl—no, a *rich* girl, I should say—hunted down by every needy fellow who wants to prop his fallen fortunes by hers, thinking no more of her person or her mind than if neither merited attention? An ugly heiress must know she is only chosen for her wealth, and is less to be pitied, if, with this knowledge, she risks her happiness with a fortune-hunter; but a handsome heiress may indulge the illusion that she is loved for herself, and woe be to her when she discovers, as soon she surely must, the truth!"

"But may not a handsome heiress be loved for herself?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu, evidently piqued by the *coups de pattes* of the cynical Mr. Rhymer, not one of which had missed its object.

"Certainly, she may; but it must only be by a man rich enough to afford falling in love, without any view to pecuniary motives, and whose character, no less

than his wealth, exempts him from the suspicion of such."

"Then you think that a man who is not rich cannot love a handsome woman for herself, if she happen to have a large fortune? Have not poor men eyes to see and hearts to feel beauty, as well as the rich?"

"I deny it not; but I believe that a poor man, if he have delicate feelings, will avoid heiresses, however great their personal attractions may be; and, if he be a proud man, will not expose himself to the accusation of being a fortune-hunter—an accusation, in my opinion, peculiarly humiliating to a gentleman."

So saying, Mr. Rhymer walked away, leaving Lord Alexander Beaulieu vexed, but unchanged in his intentions of trying to win the heiress.

"How I hate that old cynic!" thought the selfish lordling, as he strolled through the Piazza d'Espagne. "His age and infirmities screen him from the correction which his malice so frequently merits, and, aware of his impunity, he thinks himself privileged to annoy all those with whom he comes in contact. But no, not all, for to the rich and great he is as obsequious as he is insolent to those who are not in a position to gratify his *parvenu* taste for grandeur. He is quite capable of prejudicing Mrs. Sydney and her daughter against me, so I must not break with him, though I find the utmost difficulty in restraining my temper when I hear his bitter sarcasms and spiteful insinuations. If I should succeed in winning the heiress, how I will vex the old fellow! He shall never come into my house, I can tell him; and I will find a hundred ways of mortifying him, to avenge my present

compelled forbearance. O, poverty! how many evils dost thou entail! and surely the being obliged to submit to insolence from *parvenus* is not among the least bitter of the trials inflicted by thee. I could, for the nonce, be poetical, and indite a sonnet suggested by that olden inspirer of poetry, Poverty, which has deigned to set the brains of so many *attic* writers to work; but I have not time to coquet with the Muse to-day, and so I must smooth my brow, enact the amiable to the heiress, and defeat the machinations of my enemies, among whom I have not, my duns excepted, a more spiteful one than old Rhymer. *A-propos* of duns, I hear from England that mine are more clamorous and vindictive than ever, enraged by my escape from their clutches. What an oversight is it in the legislature not to have enacted a law for the protection of the persons of the younger sons of the nobility from all law processes. Protection is afforded to peers, who seldom require it; while we, poor devils, nurtured in a mode that must create a passion for expense, and with small means to defray it, are left exposed to all the evil consequences of indulging in our natural tastes. This oversight really ought to be remedied, and I must suggest the consideration of it to some of my friends at home."

Such were the reflections that passed through the mind of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he paced up and down the Piazza d'Espagne, not knowing how better to employ his time until the usual hour for paying visits should arrive. He expected also to meet Lord Fitzwarren, on whom he generally fastened himself during a portion of the day, for the sake of sharing

his *voiture de remise*, without being compelled to hire one for his own use, and who, rather than dine alone, was wont to engage him to dinner, which saved Lord Alexander the expense of that repast, and secured him a much more luxurious one, as well as better wine, than his own funds could provide. But though content to avail himself of all the advantages to be derived from the liberality of his friend, no sentiment of regard or gratitude towards him existed in the selfish heart of Lord Alexander Beaulieu. His system was to profit by the generosity or weakness of all with whom he associated; and pertinaciously did he put this system in action. Had any person attempted to prove to him that he ought to be grateful for the hospitality he received, he would have smiled at his simplicity, and asserted that he had incurred no obligation, for that Lord Fitzwarren, like many others of his class, only extended his hospitality because he could not bear to be alone. For every other kindness experienced he found some casuistical excuse for feeling no gratitude, and hence cared for no one, whatever might be the benefits received from him.

CHAPTER VI.

His was a power in all he saw
Most quickly to detect a flaw:
And none he spared; to foe or friend
His censure did alike extend.
In courteous phrase to ladies fair
He laid their secret errors bare,
Commended virtues they had not,
And those they truly had, forgot:
In short, he was a man of might,
To shoot his arrows dipp'd in spite.

When Lord Alexander Beaulieu called on Mrs. Sydney he found Strathern there, looking over some ancient maps of Rome with that lady, while her fair daughter was occupied in transcribing an Italian poem from one of her favourite authors. His visit seemed to afford little pleasure to any of the persons present; but Mrs. Sydney, with a good breeding of which, however her patience might be tried, she never lost sight, betrayed less than did the others that his presence was disagreeable to her.

Lord Alexander took a chair near Louisa, and endeavoured to draw her into conversation, but monosyllables were all he could obtain in reply, and, *malgré*

his efforts to enact the agreeable, he found the task a very difficult one with a listener so cold and abstracted as the one he was addressing. The emptiness of commonplace chat is never so much felt as when only one person takes a lively part in it. The thousand little trifles which compose the conversation between those who meet at visits, may pass off without their silliness striking one, provided no pause occurs, and that each contributes his or her quota to the general stock of words; but, when those awkward breaks take place, which prove the total absence of interest in one of the interlocutors to what is passing, the volubility of even the most intrepid *bavard* becomes checked, and he feels that he has not succeeded in his attempts to please. Lord Alexander Beaulieu experienced this disagreeable consciousness on the occasion described, and was thankful when Mrs. Sydney relieved his embarrassment by addressing a few words to him.

"I hear that Mr. Rhymer is arrived," observed Mrs. Sydney. "Have you seen him, Mr. Strathern?"

"Not yet," replied he; "but I dare say I soon shall."

"I have," observed Lord Alexander, "and can assure you that the warm sun of Naples has ripened his growing acrimony most surprisingly. He is now become a perfect misanthrope."

"No; that I must deny," said Strathern; "he is only a corrector, and not a hater, of mankind. He tells disagreeable truths, careless of the pain they may inflict on those to whom they are addressed, it must be owned, and hence is more feared than loved."

"Misanthropes never found so good an advocate," observed Mrs. Sydney, "as in a French author of celebrity, who in a recent work asserts that '*la misanthropie est un sentiment calomnié. C'est la haine du mensonge. Il n'y a pas de misanthropes, il y a des âmes qui aiment mieux fuir que feindre.*'"

"If Rhymer would be *feindre ou fuir* I should forgive him," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "but, as he will do neither, I hold him to be as insupportable in society as children who are permitted to say all they think when admitted to the drawing-room. I have heard the little urchins exclaim, 'Why is Mr. So-and-so lame?' or 'Mr. So-and-so so very ugly?' causing no less embarrassment to the unfortunate persons so noticed than to the papa and mamma of these tiresome little creatures. They, poor things, know no better, and do not mean to give pain; but Rhymer is well aware of the *endroit sensible* of those he wishes to annoy, and the Parthian's dart was not more unerring in its aim than are his sarcasms."

"They jest at scars who never felt a wound," observed Mrs. Sydney, "and therefore I may smile at those sometimes inflicted, when not too deep, on the persons selected by Mr. Rhymer, who, I must add, generally aims them only at the foolish or the vain."

"Nevertheless, mother, do you not think that the privilege he claims of saying disagreeable things disturbs the harmony of society?" demanded Miss Sydney.

"Perhaps so, my dear Louisa, by making one feel insecure in his presence, and....."

"Mr. Rhymer," said a servant, throwing open the door, and in walked that gentleman.

"I only arrived late last night," said he, "and my first visit is to you," and he bowed low on the hand of Mrs. Sydney, and then turned to her fair daughter to repeat the same ceremony.

"How well you look, ladies! I was hardly prepared to find you both so blooming."

"We have neither of us been ill since we came to Italy," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"I did not think that the air of Italy could produce any unsalutary effect on your health; but, if I might be permitted a bad pun, and a pronunciation adopted by my old friend John Kemble, I should say it was not your *room*, but your company, that I thought dangerous!"

"Very flattering to all of us who have the honour of forming a portion of the society of these ladies," remarked Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"I am no flatterer," was the reply of Mr. Rhymer, "and so I fancied you thought this morning, for you looked very much displeased when I left you. I was observing to Lord Alexander Beaulieu that, in my opinion, no man but a rich one should ever fall in love, or imagine himself to be so, with an heiress. I gave my reasons, and, why or wherefore, I cannot divine, he seemed as much disconcerted as if they were applied directly to himself," and Mr. Rhymer glanced somewhat maliciously from Lord Alexander to Miss Sydney.

"You are in error, if you supposed me to be displeased."

"So all angry men assert when they are piqued," remarked Mr. Rhymer; "but, while maintaining the

fact of your being displeased, I am quite unconscious of the cause. Perhaps you would enlighten me?"

Lord Alexander affected not to hear him, and changed the subject, by observing that Sir Richard Elsmere had arrived at Rome the previous day.

"He will be an acquisition to society," said Lord Alexander, "for I know no one more *spirituel* and amusing."

"And probably few less estimable," observed Mr. Rhymer. "I have heard such instances of his want of heart, and his great selfishness, that I have always avoided cultivating his acquaintance."

"I do not see what right society has to find fault with a man's heart, or want of heart," replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "provided he is agreeable, well-bred, and adds to the *agrémens* of the circle in which he finds himself. His wife or dependants are alone privileged to complain, if he is deficient in those qualities which constitute the happiness of domestic life, but to the world it ought to be a matter of indifference."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Rhymer. "Then you think that, provided a man is clever, polite, and witty, that is all which is required?"

"Yes, all that society requires; and I think also that, whatever may be the good qualities of the heart of an individual, if he is deficient in that amenity and good breeding on which the agreeability of society depends, he ought to be—and, I am glad to say, is—generally avoided."

Mr. Rhymer's countenance betrayed his consciousness that this last observation was aimed at him,

and terrible was the glance of concentrated malice that he cast on Lord Alexander.

"I am glad, very glad, to hear *your* opinion on all subjects," said he, "and particularly on the requisites to render a man acceptable to society. You, who are so justly esteemed, must be an excellent judge of such a question."

"It must be acknowledged," observed Mrs. Sydney, desirous to change a topic that was becoming too personal, "that Sir Richard Elsmere can be very brilliant and entertaining. No one tells a story so well."

"Yes, so people say. All admit him to be a perfect *story-teller*," observed Mr. Rhymer, with one of his most sardonic smiles. "He can set the table in a roar too, I hear, when he thinks fit, in spite of the decent dignity that pervades good company; and this, I suppose, is the reason why he is so *recherché*, for his moral qualities certainly do not entitle him to respect, whatever his friend, Lord Alexander Beaulieu, may think."

"All I know is, that, after I have heard people proclaim that Elsmere has no heart, is selfish, and not peculiarly strict in his veracity, I have also heard them add—'but he is so agreeable! we must engage him to every dinner we wish to pass pleasantly;' while, when listening to commendations on the goodness of hearts of some other men, I have heard their commenders say, 'Oh, So-and-so has the best heart in the world, it is true; but he is so ill-natured and cynical, and so prone to say disagreeable things, that we must not invite him, lest he spoil our party.'"

Lord Alexander rose and took his leave when he

had finished his last speech; and Mr. Rhymer, bursting with anger, called after him as he departed, saying, "I forgot to mention that the rich widow of a London stockbroker, worth, they say, two plums, arrived last night at my hotel. I thought the intelligence might be interesting to you."

"I do not know why you should think so, but the good-nature of Mr. Rhymer is so proverbial, that no new proof of it ought to surprise me."

"He seemed by no means as grateful as might be expected," said Mr. Rhymer; "yet really the news is worth something to a man who has been for the last two years indefatigable in his pursuit of rich women, and who has proposed for so many, that he is known in London by the *sobriquet* of the Solicitor-general. The lady in question, too — I forget her vulgar name — looks to be precisely the sort of person likely to be caught by a lordling — ill-looking, over-dressed, and self-important; never was there a more perfect picture of a City *parvenue*. 'Tell the fellow,' said she, in accents that smacked strongly of the sister country, 'that I wish to be driven all round the town to see the sights.' This speech was addressed to a woman who accompanied her, and who translated it into Italian to the *laquais de place*. Fancy a lady—if I may so far profane the term as to apply it to the person in question—attired in a crimson velvet cloak, trimmed with Russian sable, a velvet bonnet with feathers of the same colour, and a diamond *feronière* across a coarse, freckled forehead, which resembles nothing so much as the sunburnt knee of a kilted highlander."

"And this is the person you thought likely to interest Lord Alexander Beaulieu?" said Strathern.

"Whose *fortune* I thought likely to interest him; for, as money is all he thinks of in his matrimonial speculations, why should not the stockbroker's widow suit him as well as any other rich woman?"

"You are severe on him," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Not so much as he merits, I assure you; and, after all, I am only wishing to render him a service, by drawing his attention to this female Crœsus. So many feathers, and so much velvet and fur, could never be displayed except with the intention of captivating; and as, according to the vulgar phrase, first come first served, I desired that Lord Alexander Beaulieu should lose no time in being presented to her. Who knows but he may become the successor of the deceased stockbroker!"

"I can't think so ill of Beaulieu," said Strathern, "as to believe that he would contract such an alliance."

"And I believe him capable of forming even a more objectionable one for filthy lucre. The conduct of such men should be exposed, and particularly to ladies, who have not the same opportunities of becoming acquainted with the real characters of men that we have, who see examples every day how the plausibility of such fortune-hunters impose on the many."

Finding that Mr. Rhymer was determined to make a long visit, Strathern withdrew, not, it must be owned, without some fears that *he*, too, in his turn, would come in for the censure of the cynic, though

unconscious of having done any thing to incur it. Mr. Rhymer, however, had no inclination to speak ill of him; *au contraire*, he entertained a good opinion of Strathern, as one of the few young men who treated him with respect; but even had he disliked him, he would on the present occasion have forborne to express it, lest, after his attack on Lord Alexander Beaulieu, the ladies might think him a universal speaker of evil.

"How do you like Mr. Strathern?" asked Mr. Rhymer, looking searchingly at Mrs. Sydney and her daughter while he asked the question.

"I think very highly of him," replied Mrs. Sydney.

"And you, fair lady, what do *you* say?"

"He seems amiable, and is sensible and agreeable," was the answer, but a bright blush which suffused the delicate cheek of the speaker convinced Mr. Rhymer that she spoke less highly of him than she felt.

"Seems! I know not seems. He *is* a very superior young man, I can assure you," resumed he. "I have known him from his boyhood, having continually met him during his vacations at poor Lord Argentyn's, who often dwelt on his numerous fine qualities to me. A proof that he had not overrated them is, that, notwithstanding the endeavours to spoil him made by a portion of designing husband-hunting persons of your sex, and the selfish, dupe-hunting portion of mine, he has committed himself neither with the one nor the other, and has equally steered clear of those flirtations with married women, into which so many men of his age are but too prone to fall on their first entering what is called fashionable life. Strathern is neither a

gamester nor a keeper of race-horses, two rare merits in so young and so rich a man. He has but one defect that I know of—he is too good-looking—but perhaps you ladies may not consider that to be one," and he looked archly at the fair Louisa, who, at that moment, notwithstanding his abuse of Lord Alexander, was wondering how people could think Mr. Rhymer was given to say ill-natured or disagreeable things.

"And so I find Lady Wellerby and her daughters are here, seeking whom they may (*not* devour) but entrap into a marriage," said Mr. Rhymer. "When people set traps," resumed he, "they should conceal them; but Lady Wellerby, and her young—no, not *young*—ladies, let theirs be seen as plainly as the notices set up in parks and preserves in England, inscribed, 'beware of spring guns and man-traps set here,' and with the same effect, for most men avoid the snare."

"You are severe on Lady Wellerby," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"No, indeed; I am only honest enough to *say* what every one else *thinks*, but have not my *aimable franchise* to utter. That woman thinks of nothing on earth but getting her daughters married. She cares not whether the men be good or bad, invested with every virtue, or tainted by every vice—all she considers is that they be rich, and willing to make large settlements, and a thought of the future happiness of her daughters never enters her mind. She, finding her stupid lord very parsimonious, imagines that wealth, and a generous expenditure of it, constitute the real enjoyment of life, and if she can secure this

for her daughters, she will believe she has well performed her maternal duties towards them."

"Are you going to Mrs. Vernon's party to-night?" said Mrs. Sydney, desirous of changing the subject.

"What, in Heaven's name, should I do there? Look on while the ladies at the card-table show their tempers, and not their good breeding? No, I avoid my whist-playing countrywomen as carefully as I eschew the gambling-houses in London, and for the same reason I dislike seeing the worst sides of human nature. You smile, Miss Sydney, and look incredulous; nevertheless, I do hate having the bad passions called into action in my presence, and, above all, in the persons of your sex, who certainly never appear to such disadvantage as at a card-table."

"But at Mrs. Vernon's you will find conversation as well as cards. The young people sing and play, and the elderly, who, like you and I, do not play cards, converse together."

"Were I sure that I could find a place near *you*, I should be disposed to go to Mrs. Vernon's, but as that might be difficult, if not impossible, I dare not venture. Fancy me fastened by Lady Henry Mortimer, and condemned to hear—for the hundredth time, at least—the history of her rheumatism. How it began, what she felt at its commencement, how she caught it, what the doctors said, what she replied, with episodes on the cruelty of people in London who *will* fill their rooms to suffocation, and then open their windows to cool them, a process which she declares has caused all her sufferings. Or imagine me seated by Mrs. Osborn Henley, listening *bon gré mal gré* to

the account of poor dear Mr. Osborn Henley's gout, and what he tried, and was recommended to try, for its cure, and what relieved, and what did not relieve him, and what she endures at witnessing his paroxysms, and how she fears that the warm mud baths of Italy, and the cold water at Gräfenberg, are equally inefficacious in the cure of gout, and her hopes that the malady is not hereditary. Or, if I escape these ladies, may I not be thrown by my evil stars into a chair near Lady Alicia Borrowdale, who will tell me of the surprising beauty of her eldest girl, now in her seventh year, the wonderful talent of her boy, who *was very near* getting the prize at school, last examination, and the delightful precocity of her last girl, who, though only two years and a half old, can say 'Pa-pa,' and 'Mam-ma,' *almost* plainly. No; I am better at home, with a book and my own thoughts, than in such parties, where my spleen is excited by the follies or vices of those I meet. But I have paid you an unconscionable visit, fair ladies, and will now release you, by saying farewell."

"He asserts that he hates having the bad passions called into action in his presence," said Louisa Sydney, "yet scruples not to lay bare the follies and *ridicules* of all his acquaintances. I wonder what he calls this propensity to censure? I should decidedly class it among the evil passions he denounces; and I think that playing cards, though a waste of time, and showing ill temper while doing so, betrays a want of good breeding, yet both are less blameable than the constant habit of exposing the errors of all persons he happens to encounter."

"Mr. Strathern was an exception; Mr. Rhymer did not attack him," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"As he spared no one else of whom he spoke, I hardly know whether his praise of Mr. Strathern is complimentary."

"You may be assured it is, Louisa, for never was Mr. Rhymer known to praise any one who was not remarkable for the possession of good qualities."

"I admit that he is clever and well-informed, and that he can make himself agreeable, but his ill-nature displeases me; and when I detect myself laughing at his bitter *mots*, I feel ashamed of myself."

"And you are right, my dear child, for it is the laughing at such ill-natured remarks that encourages persons to make them, who frequently only do so for the sake of amusing people, and showing their own talent."

A few days after the interview with Rhymer, at Mrs. Sydney's, Strathern sat in his room, musing on the fair Louisa, who now occupied all his thoughts, when he was disturbed by a visit from Lord Fitzwarren. Latterly he had seen much less of this young nobleman, whether from accident or design, he could not tell, and the truth was, he was too much pleased with the effect to examine into the cause.

"Strathern, I want you to do me a service," said Lord Fitzwarren. "Somehow or other, I don't think I gain ground with Miss Sydney. She grows more skittish and shy every day, so I want to bring her to the point, for it's no use losing my time in dancing attendance after her, is it?"

"I really think not," was the answer.

"Well, what I want you to do is, to sound her on the subject."

"Do you mean me to propose to her for you?"

"No, not quite that, but I wish to avoid the double annoyance of being refused, and having to pay that d——d fellow, Axy Beaulieu, five hundred. You can just ask, in the course of conversation, what she thinks of me, and discover whether a proposal from me would be likely to be accepted or not."

"I really could not put such a question, Fitzwarren, and even if I could, it would not be a fair way of getting out of your bet."

"It was a deuced stupid wager to make, and I now wish I had let it alone; but who the devil could have dreamt that a young fellow with forty thousand a year, and not worse-looking than his neighbours (and Fitzwarren stole a look at himself in the opposite mirror), would be treated as coolly as I have been by Miss Sydney? Why, there's the Wellerby girls, and I begin to think they are not so much amiss, they'd jump at me if I was to make either of them an offer. Devilish good-natured creatures they are, too, for now that they know that I am hard hit with Miss Sydney, and suppose that I am to marry her, they are just as civil to me as they were before, when I used to fancy that all their civility arose from their hopes of catching me. Why, Olivia is never tired of listening to me, when I tell her about my stud, and asks me a thousand questions relative to them. She's a devilish sensible girl, I can tell you, and understands the points of a horse remarkably well. I found her the other day copying a plaster cast of a nag, and

very well she did it, by Jove! and she said she only wished she had a living model to copy. Yes; and the sister, Sophy, too, is a deuced good sort of girl. And when, the other morning, the Melbrook girls were saying that they saw nothing so remarkable in Miss Sydney, Sophy immediately took up arms for her—yes, by Jove! she did—and swore—no, she did *not* swear, she only asserted—that Miss Sydney was the most perfect beauty she ever saw, and Olivia joined in, and said that Miss Sydney was not a bit vain or conceited, though she is so beautiful. Now, I call that devilish good-natured, and it made me like the Wellerby girls better than I ever thought I should!"

Strathern could not suppress a smile at the simplicity of Fitzwarren, who, notwithstanding his declared *tendresse* for Miss Sydney, seemed well disposed to be consoled for any disappointment, in engaging her esteem, by the flatteries of two young ladies, whom, a short time before, he regarded with a sentiment nearer approaching to dislike than good-will.

"What would you advise me to do, Strathern?" asked Fitzwarren. "I can't bear letting that fellow Beaulieu win my money."

"But I don't see how you can avoid it; for, if you do not propose, he will consider the wager forfeited; and if you do, the chances are you will be refused; so in either case you will lose."

"By Jove, it's a puzzling case! is it not? If I don't propose, it's like letting his horse walk over the course; and if I do, I am sure to be distanced. Neither are pleasant. But, hang me! I prefer paying

Axy Beaulieu, without subjecting myself to the annoyance of a rejection, which will be blazed all over Rome, and having the Wellerby girls and all the rest of the set know that I was refused, which always makes a man look so devilish foolish. Yes, I'll pay the five hundred, and have an end of it."

And away went Lord Fitzwarren, with the air of a man whose mind is relieved by having come to a fixed decision.

Two days after Lord Fitzwarren had paid the forfeited wager to Lord Alexander Beaulieu, the latter wrote a studied epistle to Mrs. Sydney, enclosing one for her fair daughter, in which he laid himself (fortune he had little to offer) at her feet, as he phrased it. Mrs. Sydney was never more surprised than when she received his letter, but the young lady was even more astonished. Certain as she felt that she had never given him the least encouragement, she could not acquit him of betraying a very unusual degree of vanity and self-confidence, in thus, on so slight an acquaintance, venturing to make such a proposal.

"You see, mother, that it is not without reason that I treat the younger portion of our male acquaintance with such reserve," said Louisa, "when, even in spite of my coldness to them, I am thus assailed. Who would be an heiress, to be tormented by every designing fortune-hunter one encounters—men, whom no coldness can repel, no disdain make sensible of the utter hopelessness of their addresses ever being made acceptable!"

"These proposals annoy me more than I can tell you, my dear child, because I fear they will have the

evil effect of confirming in you the belief I have taken such pains to eradicate. Be assured that, although some men may be influenced wholly by mercenary motives in seeking to win a young woman of large fortune, *all* are not so base, and you will injure, if not destroy, your own chance of happiness by indulging such suspicions. Fancy how a high-minded and disinterested man, who loved you for yourself alone, would feel wounded and insulted if he found himself confounded with the mercenary herd who flock around an heiress."

Mrs. Sydney's thoughts were on Strathern as she spoke. With all the quickness peculiar to fond mothers, she saw from the first that he admired her daughter, and hoped his admiration would, on acquaintance, ripen into a deeper sentiment. She had marked, with pain, the chilling reserve with which Louisa met his advances towards a more familiar intercourse than was permitted to the other young men who sought to make themselves agreeable to her, and was grieved that no distinction was made between him so really deserving of favour, and those who had so much less claim to it.

With a thousand fine qualities, Louisa Sydney had one defect, and that was more an acquired than a natural one. It was suspicion, engendered by a sensibility, a *besoin d'être aimé*, and loved for herself alone, that made her doubt whether the circumstance of her being an heiress might not shut her out for ever from this blessing. With a little vanity, and self-confidence in her own charms, this painful doubt might never have entered her mind; but Louisa was a proud, not a vain, woman, and her pride, no less than her feminine deli-

cacy, revolted at the notion of being regarded only as one to be courted for her wealth. In short, the woman was jealous of the heiress, and gladly would she have resigned her splendid fortune for a competency that would preclude the possibility of suspicion of her being wooed for her gold. Her mother was too fondly attached to her, and had studied her character too well, not to have observed this defect, and not to have used every exertion to vanquish it. Her efforts might have been more successful, had not the crowd of suitors who flocked around the heiress confirmed her in her suspicion. Hence the reserve and chilling coldness, adopted by her towards her admirers, and which, in the case of several of them, as well as in that of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, having failed to prevent their pushing their presumption so far as to demand her hand, only served to confirm her doubts.

Often was Mrs. Sydney on the point of expressing her high opinion of Strathern, and of pointing out that *he*, at least, could never be suspected of mercenary motives, his own large fortune exempting him from any necessity for such. A moment's reflection, however, taught her that it was wiser to let her daughter learn from others the position filled by Strathern in his own country, and the high estimation in which he was held by all whose opinions were valuable, than to have the air of forcing Louisa's attention towards him.

Mrs. Sydney's wedded life had been one of unbroken happiness, as far as regarded the mutual affection, which had never known a change, between her and her excellent husband. Married in her seventeenth year, she became the joyful mother of a son ere she

had numbered her eighteenth, an event which, if possible, increased the affection of Mr. Sydney. Two years after she gave birth to Louisa, and from that period her felicity had been uninterrupted, until the sudden death of her husband, occasioned by the bursting of his gun when out shooting, made a fatal breach in it. The fond wife was walking towards a wood, where she knew he was enjoying the sports of the field, when she met the procession bearing his lifeless body to his late happy home. The shock nearly destroyed her, and for many months her life was despaired of! Time, that worker of miracles, that only healer of broken hearts, achieved its usual conquest over hers. Religion, and her love for her children, led her to endeavour to forget "that such things were, and were most sweet," as a doting husband who sympathised in her tastes, who shared her joys, who made her life a continued scene of happiness, and with whom she looked forward to descend into the vale of years, still cherished and cared for, until at last they should sink into the grave together—all this happiness had fled for ever; all these hopes had vanished; yet she must live on until it pleased the Almighty to reunite her to *him*, so fondly loved, so deeply mourned. She must dwell in the abode where *they* had been so blest; must behold his vacant chair, must weep over the pillow on which his dear head had reposed, and must look forward to see hours, days, weeks, months, and years roll away in dreary, hopeless widowhood. She vowed never to give him a successor in her affections, henceforth to be devoted wholly to her children; and well did she keep her determination, although, in after-years, many had been

the attempts made to induce her to change it. Still young, handsome, and rich, people could not understand why Mrs. Sydney refused so many of what are called unexceptionable offers. Her neighbours foretold that she would not always remain so inexorable; but, as year after year passed away, they began to think they had been wrong in their predictions, and shook their heads, and hoped her children would repay her for the sacrifice she had made for their sakes. But, in rejecting all matrimonial overtures, Mrs. Sydney had not made any sacrifice. Her heart could know no second love, and, true to the memory of the first, she shrunk from the very thoughts of another marriage, or of giving a step-father to her children. Her son, in whom she traced the image of his lost parent, as well as many of his fine and noble qualities, had only reached his fifteenth year, when a brain-fever put a period to his existence. Who shall paint the anguish of the doting and bereaved mother at this cruel blow! The deep wound inflicted twelve years before seemed to open and bleed afresh at this new and terrible stroke of affliction. Her health suffered so severely that her physicians ordered her to remove into a warmer climate, and she and her daughter, then in her thirteenth year, went to pass the winter in Italy.

It was fortunate for Mrs. Sydney that in the unceasing care and attention bestowed on her daughter's education her mind was drawn away from the continual contemplation of the causes of sorrow she had endured. She felt the necessity of occupation, and some strong and engrossing interest, to keep her from dwelling too much on the past; and with this conviction she parted

from the governess who had hitherto assisted her in the education of Louisa, and devoted herself wholly to the task. It required no little exertion of self-control to abide by this wise resolution, as all who have experienced grief will acknowledge; for there is a positive fascination in the indulgence of sorrow, which it is most difficult to break through, and many a fine intellect has been impaired by its influence. It seems like infidelity towards the dear departed to find consolation for his loss, and his memory is cherished with a fondness that renders the mourner more prone to look back to the happier past, when blessed with his presence, than patiently to support the actual present, or anticipate the dreary future.

The duty she had undertaken was one not to be neglected, and often did the devoted mother rise after a sleepless night from her tear-stained pillow, to give her morning lessons to her daughter, when one with a less firm sense of the importance of the task she had undertaken would have resigned herself to the selfish indulgence of regret. This courageous exertion in time brought its own reward. Mrs. Sydney gradually, though slowly, recovered her peace of mind; and, while instilling those principles into the ductile one of Louisa which had formed her own best consolation under the trials with which it had pleased the Almighty to afflict her, she felt she was laying the surest foundation for the future happiness of her child.

CHAPTER VII.

"Beware suspicion—let it not intrude
Into thy breast; 'twill poison all thy joys,
And tear asunder every tender tie
That love and friendship form to sweeten life."

The change of climate proved so salutary to the health of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, that, although the former would have wished to return and establish herself altogether in England, she still continued so delicate that she was only able to remain in her native country during the summer months, which she made it a point of duty to do; but, though absent from home in the inclement season, the poor there were not forgotten, and her charities, administered through the hands of the rector of the parish and his excellent wife, flowed as liberally and constantly as if the kind donor were not absent.

The death of her brother rendered Louisa Sydney the heiress to a very large estate (charged only with four thousand a year to her mother) and a considerable sum in the funds, which, owing to the long minority, increased yearly. Mrs. Sydney feared that these possessions, however they might add to the

importance of her daughter in a worldly point of view, were not calculated to insure her chance of happiness; for she, like many unambitious and kind-hearted mothers, thought more of seeing her child happily than greatly wedded, and trembled lest her high-minded and lovely daughter might become the prey of some mercenary man of fashion urged to repair his broken fortune by her splendid one. While guarding against the chance of such a misfortune, Mrs. Sydney felt the necessity of preventing, if possible, the mind of her daughter from imbibing any of the suspicions so apt to be engendered, while adopting the caution dictated by prudence. Unfortunately, however, an old and faithful servant, who had never left the family since she had performed the functions of nurse to Mr. Sydney, who had been placed about the person of his daughter from her birth, and who now enacted the part of *femme de chambre* to that young lady, defeated the desire and care of Mrs. Sydney on this point.

Mrs. Murray, for so was the nurse called, loved her young lady almost to idolatry, and believed she was giving an excellent proof of her attachment when she was instilling into her pure and artless mind suspicions that never else could have found entrance there. She would dwell with never-tiring energy on the dangers to which heiresses were exposed from the selfish and the designing, and the little chance there existed of even the fairest amongst that doomed class ever being loved for herself. She would sigh, nay, even weep, as she poured into the guileless ear of Louisa narratives founded on the fates of the heiresses who,

as she related, had been lured into marriage by some gay deceiver, who feigned a flame never felt, and who, when the fatal knot was tied with the tongue which could not be untied by the teeth, threw off the mask, and tyrannized over the unhappy dupe he had made, lavishing her fortune in the indulgence of his own selfish pleasures and vices, and leaving her a victim to his neglect.

Such tales, often repeated, sunk deep into the breast of Louisa Sidney; yet her generous nature struggled against the suspicions instilled into her ear by the nurse, and often prompted her to doubt that men could be so base, or that *all* heiresses could be doomed to such fates as those recorded by her "good Murray;" and she would say—

"But there surely must be exceptions. A poor man might love without mercenary motives, and men who have large and unimpaired fortunes of their own might love and wed a rich woman without any view to her wealth."

"Alas! no, my dear young lady; poor men are ever swayed by the desire of wealth, and even the rich seek riches as ardently as do the impoverished; and the most beautiful ladies, when they are heiresses, find, when too late, that they are never loved for themselves."

Such impressions, conveyed while the ductile mind of Louisa was most susceptible of receiving indelible ones, and while her reason was not sufficiently matured to repel them, produced precisely the effect which her mother most dreaded. She became cold, reserved, and guarded. With a thousand generous

and noble feelings in her own breast, which might have taught her to believe in the existence of similar ones in the hearts of others, she saw in every man who sought to please her a mercenary suitor who thought only of her wealth, and she spurned the homage which she supposed to be based on such unworthy motives.

Mrs. Sydney discovered, with deep regret and surprise, the impression made on the mind of her daughter; but the discovery was, alas! made when too late wholly to eradicate the error. She decided, after much reflection bestowed on the subject, that it would be wiser to let time work its gradual influence in removing this defect than by dwelling on it, by argument, perhaps to increase it; for the fond mother was not so far blinded by maternal love as to be insensible to the fact that a spice of obstinacy sometimes exhibited itself in the character of her dear Louisa, betrayed more through a pertinacity in retaining her opinions than a courageousness in defending them. She hoped much from the effect to be produced by the personal qualities of the suitor who should first captivate her daughter's heart; and with this hope she soothed her own mind, and left unruffled that of Louisa by not referring to the topic.

Mrs. Sydney was naturally rather of an indolent disposition, the result, probably, of a languid temperament and delicate health, which, requiring quiet and repose, induced a careful avoidance of all that would militate against the enjoyment of those blessings. Hence, her daughter early learned to emancipate herself from all mental restraint with regard to

her opinions, although her tender affection for and obedience to her mild and amiable mother precluded the possibility of her entering into any thing like discussions with her parent, who, experiencing from her child an invariable and affectionate attention, little suspected that on one point their sentiments and opinions were wholly opposed. Open as day, and full of confidence in the worthiness of others, Mrs. Sydney's was a nature that, knowing no guile, suspected none. And such, probably, would Louisa have been, had not the narrow-minded but well-intentioned Murray infused suspicions into her youthful breast; and, although the natural nobleness and generosity of her heart sometimes triumphed over this acquired defect, it at others exerted a sway, the evidence of which pained and displeased her mother.

Many as were the admirers which the beauty and talents of her daughter attracted around her, Strathern was the only one whom Mrs. Sydney deemed worthy to aspire to the possession of her hand, or whom she thought calculated to remove the suspicion, which she now but too plainly saw had crept into Louisa's mind, of the mercenary views of those who sought to please her. His character had borne the inquiries she had made, and his taste and acquirements led her to believe that he, who had at so early an age developed such fine qualities, and avoided the follies and vices into which so many of his contemporaries had recklessly plunged, could not fail to become a distinguished member of society, and a man into whose care the happiness of a youthful and beautiful woman could be safely confided. With this conviction,

she had noticed with pleasure his admiration of her daughter, before Louisa herself had remarked it, but she carefully abstained from revealing her thoughts on this subject to her, lest she should awaken the suspicions to which every new admirer was subjected, before time had been given to Strathern to make the favourable impression which would combat them. Mrs. Sydney, therefore, was always ready to welcome and converse with him, while Louisa sat apart, pursuing her avocations of painting or embroidering as if he were not present, and only dropping in a few words in the animated conversation going on, when appealed to by either of the interlocutors engaged in it. But though nearly a silent listener, she was not an unmindful one. The justice and high-mindedness of Strathern's sentiments, drawn out by her mother's remarks, rather than spontaneously displayed, struck and pleased her, and she would sometimes express a dissent from their opinions, merely for the pleasure of being refuted by him, who possessed the happy art of convincing the reason, without ever alarming the *amour propre* of those with whom he differed. If Strathern asked permission to look at the drawing on which she was engaged, she was surprised to hear him, unlike all her other male acquaintance, point out some defects, and suggest an improvement, while they could only discover perfections, and express the most exaggerated praise. Nevertheless, though the progress Strathern was making in her esteem was sure, it was slow, so slow that he was often tempted to abandon the pursuit, which held forth so little prospect of being crowned with ultimate success; but so strong was the

power which this lovely creature exercised over him, that he could not tear himself from her presence.

Nor would Louisa have seen him depart without feelings of regret never previously experienced by her for the absence of any of his sex. She had grown to expect him at a certain hour, to know his footstep, and to feel her heart beat quicker at his approach; and though she would have died rather than that *he* should learn the state of her feelings, or that her mother should divine them, she was conscious that they originated not in a mere girlish fancy, and that it would be no easy task for her to subdue them, if, on a more intimate acquaintance, such a measure should be found necessary.

It has been said that the feelings of queens born to reign—not queen-consorts—differ in many respects from those of other women, and in none so much as in the doubts and fears experienced when first they feel the tender passion. Accustomed to empire, they are disposed to be impatient when made sensible that *they*, who hitherto had influenced the destinies of those around them, are now dependant for happiness on another—that *other*, perhaps, not always so smitten by the attractions of the woman as dazzled by the rank of the queen. How many anxieties and fears are such a position calculated to excite, each poisoning the first sense of enjoyment which love awakens in a youthful breast! Heiresses to great fortunes may be likened to queens in this respect, and the very wealth so desired and envied, and which can confer so many gratifications, exempts them from the pure and unalloyed happiness reserved to the portionless maiden,

who feels secure that she is chosen and loved for herself alone.

"I will closely observe him, learn to know his real character and disposition," said Louisa Sydney to herself in the privacy of her chamber; "and if I find them all that I could wish, and that myself, and not my fortune, is the object which attracts him, then will I permit him to see that I am not indifferent to his attentions."

But then came the doubt whether these attentions were directed to *her*, and whether they were not wholly paid to her mother; and this doubt inflicted a pang.

"Mamma is still very handsome," said Louisa, and she sighed while she made the admission; "and she is not yet too old to inspire the tender passion," and she sighed still more deeply. "She is considerably younger than Lady L. or Lady M., who still hold hearts captive. What if he should be in love with *her*, while I, vain fool as I have been, was imagining that he only played the agreeable to her in order to conciliate me! Yes, it is, it must be so."

And a new pang made itself felt in the breast of Louisa, as she retraced the long and interesting conversations and the animated looks and smiles which took place almost daily between her mother and Strathern. These thoughts preyed on her mind, and gave a pensive air to her countenance as she entered the breakfast-room, with cheeks unusually pallid, the morning after this alarming doubt had first presented itself to her imagination. She caught herself frequently, during the matinal repast, looking at her mother; and, as she marked the smoothness and

delicacy of her face, the brilliancy of her eyes, the silken texture and luxuriance of her hair, and the whiteness of her teeth, she admitted to herself that it was nothing strange that such a woman should still achieve conquests.

"But *he* is so young," thought Louisa, "that a preference, which, in a man of a similar age to mamma's might seem natural enough, in *him* appears somewhat extraordinary, more especially when a daughter of my years"—and for the moment she was disposed to think herself arrived at very mature ones —"is present to remind him of the disparity that exists between him and the object of his *tendresse*."

"You are thoughtful to-day, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Am I, mamma! I was not aware of it;" and a rosy blush betrayed the disingenuousness of this speech.

"I begin to think you are tired of Rome, Louisa, and if so, I am ready to leave it when you like."

"No, mamma, I assure you I am not at all tired of Rome; *au contraire*, I prefer it to all other parts of Italy. I like its grave aspect, its ruins, its matchless Vatican, and its glorious St. Peter's. I dislike nothing in the Eternal City but the balls, dinners, and *soirées* introduced into it by our compatriots, who seem to forget they are not in London, and pursue the same dull and heartless round, of what they misname pleasure, that they follow there."

"You are becoming quite a philosopher, dearest; but, to confess the truth, I, too, disapprove of the plan adopted by the English, of leading precisely the

same mode of existence in a city calculated to awaken such serious reflections as this does, as they pursue during the saturnalia of a London season, when, emerging from what they call the dull routine of a country life, they plunge into the gaieties of the metropolis. To get partners to make up their rubbers at whist seems to be the whole object of ladies of a certain age, as to secure partners for life is the sole aim of the young ones. These objects I should think might be more easily accomplished at home, and it does appear very incongruous to see persons so insensible to the scene around them."

"Thank Heaven, however, you, mamma, are not a card-player, and I am not a husband-hunter!"

"I hardly know whether I ought to rejoice in my ignorance of card-playing, Louisa, for it frequently exposes me to sour looks and angry tosses of the head when a person is required to make up a rubber, and I declare my incapacity to do so. It was only three nights ago that I overheard Lady Melderton observe that 'those who did not play cards had no business at parties, and that she supposed it was the desire to appear young that induced some people,' and she glanced rather spitefully at me, 'to decline playing.'"

"What an ill-natured woman!" said Louisa.

"No, not precisely ill-natured — only selfish, and angry when her own pleasures are interrupted. Cards are her sole amusement, and she cannot pardon any one who is not ready to assist in furnishing it."

"What surprises me," observed Louisa, "is that persons can find pleasure in what occasions such frequent loss of temper. Only look at Lady Melderton

when she loses ; her face, handsome as it is at other times, becomes perfectly disagreeable then. She gets red and pale by turns, her eyes grow eager, her mouth becomes pinched, her cheeks elongated, and her hands twitch—in short, one glance at her ought to cure any woman of this unfeminine passion for play."

"You forget, my dear, that people always sit down with the hope of winning, and even the ill-tempered are in good humour while they win."

"I really don't know, mamma, whether the triumph which, however they endeavour to conceal it, always betrays itself in their countenances when they win, is not more disagreeable to witness than their unrepressed anger when they lose. No, I shall never be a card-player."

"So has many a person at your age said, my dear Louisa ; but in after years they have changed their opinions. When age comes on, bringing with it the infirmities inseparable from a protracted state of existence, and when the spirits fail, and the sight fades, a rubber of whist has often been found a resource for passing the long winter evenings, which, without it, might have hung heavily on those too languid for conversation."

"And the old are privileged to play at cards provided they do so in moderation, that it is not made the business of their lives, and that they do not stake large sums on the game. But how unwise it is in the young, or even in the middle-aged, while yet in the possession of health and good spirits, to anticipate this resource of the aged, and to devote their evenings to cards ! It seems to me quite incomprehensible."

"And certainly is highly reprehensible. But idleness, that bane of life, and the desire for excitement lead many to the card-table. I remember hearing a professed gamester once assert that play was as necessary to him as food and raiment; and that even the excitement attendant on losing was preferable to the stagnation of mind peculiar to the hours not spent in gambling."

"In what a perverted state the mind of the person making such an acknowledgment must be, and with so many sources of pure and rational enjoyment as this world affords to those possessed of a competency! To me it appears that the contemplation of nature, the beautiful skies, the verdant earth, and all that adorns it; the boundless and sublime sea, the clear and sparkling lakes and rivers, are pregnant with inexhaustible delight. Then the vast mine of literature, open to those who seek its enduring pleasures, the study of the fine arts and sciences which yield such untiring interest to those who can appreciate them! How, with such resources for happily filling up every hour, can persons seek the card-table to kill time?"

"The baleful influence of bad example engenders, and habit fixes, this dangerous and engrossing vice, the indulgence in which unfits its votaries for better, nobler things, and has led to the destruction of many aristocratic families. How many men have I known who commenced life with the most brilliant prospects, yet, by play, ere they had reached maturity, had plunged themselves and those dear to them in inextricable ruin! Of all infatuations this is to me the

most inexplicable, and of all vices it is the one I most dread, because it is as destructive to those who plunge into it as the North Sea is said to be to the vessels lost in it, of which not even a portion of the wrecks is ever again seen. Of the virtues wrecked in gaming, how few traces remain! All, all are engulphed, and yet no one takes warning by the fearful examples so often furnished to them; and every year beholds fortune, fame, and peace, sacrificed at this shrine of Mammon."

"I will never marry a man who does not hold play in as great abhorrence as you do, dearest mother," said Louisa Sydney, gravely; and Mrs. Sydney heard the determination with satisfaction.

Though deeply offended, and mortified at being repulsed by Miss Sydney, Lord Alexander Beaulieu did not discontinue his visits to her. He had two motives in pursuing this line of conduct — the first was to avoid its being known that he had been rejected by that young lady, a fact which he was most anxious should be concealed, and which a cessation of his visits to her would lead people to guess; and the second, a scheme which had entered his head, of trying whether his matrimonial projects, if directed towards her mother, might not prove more successful. He now paid the most assiduous court to Mrs. Sydney, offering her his arm on every occasion; hovering near her wherever she appeared, and only just showed that degree of placid and respectful politeness to her lovely daughter to which every lady in society is entitled. As neither mother nor daughter ever gave the slightest hint of his having proposed for the latter,

and, as he was most careful never to betray the least intimation on the subject, the fact was wholly unknown to the circle in which both parties moved, and was only suspected by Strathern, whose lover-like, quick perception had marked the previous attentions of Lord Alexander Beaulieu to Miss Sydney, and, noticing their cessation, judged how the case really stood. This sudden transfer of his assiduities from the young lady to her mother did not serve to elevate him in the opinion of Strathern, who felt positively annoyed that a woman, in every way so superior as Mrs. Sydney, should be selected for the dupe of the mercenary young man, while she, unsuspicious of his motives, extended to him the same politeness shared by all her acquaintance. Louisa observed, with a contempt, the symptoms of which she was at little pains to conceal, the indelicate conduct of her late suitor, and only wondered that her mother saw not the cause which actuated it. But, the truth was, Mrs. Sydney considered herself so wholly out of the reach of flirtations or courtships, that a notion of any man, and more especially a young man who had aspired to her daughter's hand, forming views relative to herself never for a moment entered her head.

This new proof of the baseness to which money can tempt its worshippers to descend strengthened Louisa in the bad opinion she entertained of mankind, and induced an increased coldness on her part, not only to the unworthy portion of it, but to those wholly exempt from the selfish calculation which so strongly excited her disgust. Strathern marked with pain the

change in her manner, and, ignorant of the real cause, was tempted to attribute it to caprice, a failing it grieved him to discover in one he had deemed so faultless. The annoyance visible in his demeanour was not unnoticed by Louisa, who erroneously imagined that it originated in jealousy at the attention paid by Lord Alexander Beaulieu to her mother; and this supposition did not serve to increase her happiness. She observed the look of displeasure with which Strathern regarded his supposed rival, when, as was often the case, he found him occupying the seat by Mrs. Sydney which he had formerly been wont to fill, and this confirmed her suspicions. Yet, painful as were the feelings they excited, they produced one unexpected result. Now that she could no longer imagine that Strathern had any views with regard to herself, it was unnecessary to maintain the reserve towards him hitherto observed; and, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu addressed his conversation wholly to Mrs. Sydney, her daughter would occasionally talk to Strathern, until, by degrees, not only did her stately coldness fade away, as snow melts before the genial influence of sunbeams, but she forgot, or ceased to indulge, any of the suspicions that had lately crossed her mind. Mrs. Sydney noticed with pleasure the intimacy thus slowly but securely forming between her daughter and the only man she had hitherto seen to whom she could have willingly entrusted her fate, and, desirous to have them more thrown together, she bore with patience the engrossing attentions of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, which tended

to effect this point, by rendering it in some degree incumbent on Louisa to converse with Strathern while she talked with the other.

Encouraged by Mrs. Sydney's politeness, which his preposterous vanity led him to attribute to a more tender sentiment, Lord Alexander Beaulieu now thought it time to make to the mother the same declaration of love he had only a few weeks previously offered to the daughter, and, as on the former occasion, he did this by letter. Seldom had Mrs. Sydney experienced a feeling so nearly akin to anger as when she perused his epistle, but this feeling merged into contempt at the unblushing impudence with which the writer presumed to avow a flame for her, so soon after having professed the most ardent passion for Louisa. She accused herself for having hitherto treated Lord Alexander Beaulieu with an indulgence, which, though meant only to soothe his disappointment at the rejection of her daughter, he had evidently mistaken for an encouragement of his views towards herself, and she wrote him a refusal in terms so cold and stately as to leave him no hope that even the continuance of his acquaintance would in future be agreeable to her. That something had occurred to ruffle the usual equanimity of her mother Louisa soon became aware, although Mrs. Sydney forbore to name the subject. The truth was, she felt ashamed to let her daughter know that so great a liberty had been taken with her, as she considered the proposal made as nothing short of an insult offered. But when several days passed, and Lord Alexander Beaulieu appeared no more in

their *salon*, and evidently avoided them when they met elsewhere, the truth flashed on the mind of Louisa, and she ventured to hint at it to her mother.

"Don't let us speak of him, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney, her cheeks growing red with anger. "He is a vain, foolish man, and I have signified to him that his visits are not any longer acceptable here."

The rage of the discarded suitor knew no bounds. What! to be refused by a woman twelve years at least his senior, and with a grown daughter too! It was too vexatious!—and he promised himself that, if an occasion ever offered, he would wreak his vengeance on both mother and daughter for the double disappointment they had given him. He had already, in his mind's eye, appropriated to his own use the large jointure of Mrs. Sydney, calculated the probable accumulation from the savings so prudent a woman must have made, and questioned even the chance of acquiring some advantage from the noble fortune of her daughter, when she should become *his* daughter-in-law. And now, all these bright visions had faded, and he found himself with little more than half the five hundred so fortunately won from Lord Fitzwarren—the rest having gone to pay his bills at Rome—to carry on the war, as he termed it, for the next year, before the expiration of which he could not venture to return to England, his elder brother having only assisted him with a loan on those terms, while he temporised with his numerous and impatient creditors at home. What was to be done? The rejection of Mrs. Sydney would be guessed at, if not revealed by her, owing to his no longer being seen in

attendance on her, and he should get laughed at and ridiculed by his *clique*, on the members of which his own powers of ridicule had been so often and unsparingly tried that they would rejoice in an opportunity of avenging themselves, and show him no mercy. Something must be done before his rejection became known, and he turned over in his mind what that something must be. After serious consideration, and mature deliberation, as the old story says, he determined, as the best mode of silencing any dreaded report, on offering his homage to some other lady; but who that lady was to be became the next point to be determined upon. There was then, unhappily, no other heiress at Rome, nor even a rich widow, to indemnify him for his late disappointments. He rubbed his brow as he pondered over the different unmarried women in society, and exclaimed, "No; there is not one with money." At that instant a noise in the street attracted him to the window, and he saw the carriage of Mrs. Maclaurin, the widow of the rich stockbroker, driven past. Like lightning, the notion of transferring his views flashed through his mind. She was not young, was ugly, and vulgar, it was true—but she was rich, immensely rich, and wealth, in his opinion, atoned for every defect. Yes, he would pay his court to Mrs. Maclaurin immediately, and so have the air of quitting, instead of being quitted by the Sydneys. But how was he to become acquainted with this lady? Ay! here was the difficulty. In the circle in which he moved she was not admitted, and he knew not a single person who could present him to her. A new plan occurred to him.

He would change his lodging, take up his abode in the hotel in which she resided, and seek some mode, however irregular and unceremonious, of introducing himself to her, and, *comme ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*, that once accomplished, he doubted not that the result would be perfectly satisfactory to his wishes.

While shrinking in alarm from the bare notion of being held up to the ridicule of the society in which he moved, Lord Alexander Beaulieu hesitated not to plot and scheme how best to carry into execution his mean and mercenary views on the vulgar widow of the stockbroker, convinced that, if he succeeded in gaining possession of her fortune, he might defy, such is the power of wealth, the ill-natured comments likely to be made on such a *mésalliance*. He was sufficiently well acquainted with the fashionable world, the only one whose suffrage he valued, or to whose opinions he referred, not to be well aware that riches, however acquired, could always obtain for their possessor toleration, if not consideration in it. To be sure, the fastidious portion of his acquaintance might smile in derision of the ugly and vulgar woman he wished to make his bride, and for a short time look coldly on him for having selected such a one ; but the splendour of his *fêtes*, and the frequency of the *recherchés* dinners he meant to give, would soon silence their censures, for he knew by experience that, of all means of stopping the mouths of his fashionable *soi-disant* friends, good dinners, often repeated, were the most effectual.

Thus did Lord Alexander Beaulieu, the man of fashion, the man of the world, reason ; and so would many a one of his acquaintance reason too, for there are

but too many in the circles to which they belong, who, while shrinking from ridicule, are ready to commit any meanness that can tend to accomplish the projects they have in view. This dread of ridicule, and carelessness of incurring well-merited censure, is the result of the actual state of society in certain classes, where money, like charity, is supposed to cover a multitude of sins, and where the world's dread laugh is much more feared than the stings of conscience, or even the divine anger. Marrying for money is so common an event in the present day, that it is not only tolerated, but reckoned praiseworthy; hence, men of good family, but with small fortunes, consider themselves as marketable commodities, to be disposed of to the highest bidder, and speculate on all their imagined or real advantages to enhance their pretensions. Of all the mercenary herd who might be found in the circles of fashion, not one entertained a higher opinion of himself than did Lord Alexander Beaulieu, yet this inordinate self-admiration was accompanied by so little self-respect that he was willing to barter his person and name for a fortune, wholly regardless how plain, vulgar, and illiterate the woman might be, by a marriage with whom it was to be acquired. He would have, doubtlessly, preferred wedding a young and beautiful girl of good family and large fortune, like Miss Sydney, had she smiled on his suit, or even her mother, had she deigned to accept his proposal; but, as neither were to be won, and no other rich women of good family were at Rome, he was determined to try his fortune with the stockbroker's widow.

CHAPTER VIII.

For husbands ever on the watch,
Like spiders trying flies to catch,
They spread their nets, and, when too late,
The victim struggles with his fate.
Unhappy wretch! for aye condemned
To drag a chain he cannot rend,
And tread the cheerless path of life,
Encumber'd with a heartless wife.

The advice given by Lady Wellerby to her daughters had been strictly followed by them, and so advantageous had been its effects, that from the time that Lord Fitzwarren had, in utter despair of success, abandoned his pursuit of Miss Sydney, he had fallen into the habit of dropping in, *sans cérémonie*, at Lady Wellerby's, for the purpose, as he termed it, of killing time, by chatting with her daughters. It was not that he really felt any pleasure in their society, or experienced the least preference for them, that he thus paid his daily visits, but the truth was, he knew not how otherwise to get rid of the hours that hung so heavily on his hands, and sought the Wellerbys as

his only refuge from being left to his own resources, which were but feeble, against the enemy he most dreaded—*ennui*. Had there been a horse-dealer of any celebrity at Rome, or a club where he could have met some of his acquaintances, who, like himself, had no pleasure in antiquities or works of art, never would he have frequented Lady Wellerby's; as it was, he became a daily visitor there. To a weak man, habit is a dangerous thing. It renders supportable objects which, previously to its being contracted, were not only viewed by him with indifference but even with dislike, and, like the use of snuff or tobacco, from which persons at first recoil, after some time habit makes those formerly disapproved not only endurable, but agreeable. In these daily visits of Lord Fitzwarren to Lady Wellerby, the young ladies were wont to continue their avocations unrestrained by his presence—nay, more, they selected those in which he seemed disposed to take some interest. Lady Olivia affected to take a sudden passion for drawing horses, and her sister wasted many sheets of paper in endeavouring to cut out something in the shape of those animals.

"Well done, by Jove!—a capital attempt," said Lord Fitzwarren, as, seated by the girls, he one day looked over a drawing on which Lady Olivia was engaged. "Yes, you have a real genius for drawing horses, and, when I can find a fine, thorough-bred, English nag, I will buy it at any price, that you may have a good model to copy."

"Will you, indeed? How kind of you, and how much obliged to you I shall feel! I always had a

passion for horses, but until *you* taught me to distinguish and appreciate the really good ones, I had no power of drawing them. Now I feel that if you will but have patience with me, and continue your instructions, I shall soon be able to render justice to the noble animal."

"The back is somewhat too long—shorten it; make the legs less thin, for though fine legs are a beauty in a horse, they must not be too slight, or he would be apt to break down; the shoulder, too, is heavy, and the neck clumsy."

"I will alter them immediately," said the Lady Olivia, taking a piece of Indian-rubber, and quickly effacing the lines, and substituting new ones. "Now, do, *dear* Lord Fitzwarren, tell me if this is better;" and with the docility of a good child, she held the drawing out for his approbation, looking up innocently in his face all the while with pleading eyes and an affectedly sweet smile.

"Yes, this *is* better, infinitely better. By Jove! you improve amazingly."

"Thanks to your instruction," observed Lady Olivia, with a glance full of gratitude. "Oh! how I *should* like to have fine horses," exclaimed she, with assumed enthusiasm, "and go into the stable, and see the dear noble animals fed!"

"Would you, *indeed!*" asked Lord Fitzwarren, his face brightening up.

"Above all things in the world," resumed the lady; "except going out hunting. *That* has ever been my utmost ambition, *mais, helas!* I have no chance of such happiness!" and she sighed deeply.

"Who knows? Don't despair!" said Lord Fitzwarren.

"You must not give me false hopes, for mamma would never let me go out hunting, even if I had a horse," observed Lady Olivia. "Would you, mamma?" turning to Lady Wellerby, who affected to be busily engaged reading her English letters at the other end of the room, but who was a pleased and attentive spectatress of the scene in which her artful and well-schooled daughter was so cleverly enacting her part.

"Did you speak to me, Olivia?" asked the lady-mother, slowly raising her eyes from the letter she was affecting to peruse.

"Yes, mamma; I asked you if you would permit me to go out hunting?"

"Go out hunting, child! An unmarried woman go out hunting? I never heard such a thing;" and Lady Wellerby elevated her eyebrows, and opened her small eyes to their utmost extent, with a look of well-acted astonishment.

"You see I was right," said Lady Olivia, and she sighed profoundly. "No; such happiness is not reserved for me. *I* shall never be able to go out hunting," and she shook her head slowly, and looked with a melancholy expression at Lord Fitzwarren.

"Not until you are married," replied he.

"So few men are really good riders, and only such could teach their wives to ride, that I have little chance of being so fortunate as to be selected by one;" and Lady Olivia sighed more deeply than ever.

"Don't despair. What wager will you bet me that

before six months you are not married to a regular fox-hunter?"

"You are jesting, Lord Fitzwarren; I see you are," and the lady pouted and looked more sad than before.

"By Jove, I am not! Never was more serious in my life. I'll bet you five guineas to two; I'd make it fifty, only that I know young ladies seldom have much pocket-money, and I don't want to win all yours."

"I would take your wager," said Lady Olivia, in a low voice, "only that mamma would be angry, as she never allows us to make bets."

"She need know nothing about the matter," whispered Lord Fitzwarren, "so take my wager."

"Done," said Lady Olivia; and she nodded her head knowingly, and held out her hand to him, saying, "I shall be sure to win your five guineas; for, fond as I am of horses, and much as I should like to go out hunting, I don't know a single fox-hunter that I would marry."

Lady Wellerby, on whom not a word of this discourse had been lost, and who augured the happiest result from it, was so alarmed by this unexpected speech of her daughter, that she positively started, and turned up her eyes towards the ceiling as if appealing to Heaven against the stupidity of that young lady. But Lady Olivia, who observed the movement, smiled inwardly at her own superior tact, while waiting to see what effect the *naïveté* of her declaration would have on him to whom it was addressed.

Lord Fitzwarren looked perfectly astounded and

crestfallen as he gazed inquiringly on the unconscious countenance assumed by Lady Olivia, and, after a pause of a few minutes, exclaimed—

"And so you don't know a single fox-hunter whom you would marry?"

"No," replied the lady.

"Then, I suppose, you wouldn't marry me, eh?"

"But *you* are not a fox-hunter," said the lady, looking most innocently, "are you?"

"Why, what the devil else have you taken me for?"

"You never *told* me you were, and I—I—" and she cast down her eyes, and raised her handkerchief to her face, in affected confusion, to conceal, not her blushes, but her want of them.

"Well, I did not take you to be such a simpleton," said Lord Fitzwarren, his countenance brightening up. "But now you know that I am a fox-hunter—ay, and a most determined one, too—what do you say to your wager at present, eh? Come, confess that you haven't much chance of winning."

Lady Olivia still kept her handkerchief to her face, and seemed speechless from emotion.

"What will you give to be let off, eh? But, hang me, if I can account for *your* not knowing that which every one of my acquaintance is aware of, namely, that Melton has not a more thorough-going Nimrod than myself. Well, is there now a fox-hunter of your acquaintance that you would marry? Don't keep hiding your face, but say, will you have me or not?"

Lady Olivia extended her hand to him, and whispered, "Oh! I am so happy; but *do* ask mamma, for I am so overpowered—so....."

Lord Fitzwarren unceremoniously clasped her to his breast, imprinted a kiss on her lips, and walked up to Lady Wellerby, who affected not to be aware of what was going on at the other end of the room.

"Lady Wellerby," said he, "I am a plain-spoken, blunt fellow. I wish to marry Olivia; and, as I suppose you and her father can have no reasonable objection, the sooner the affair is settled the better."

"All this is so sudden, so wholly unexpected, that I am quite taken by surprise," said the wily mother. "Come here, my dear child;" and she beckoned to Lady Olivia, who approached her with assumed timidity. "Do you entertain for Lord Fitzwarren that decided preference and fond attachment, without which, I hope, no child of mine would ever think of entering the married state?"

"Oh! yes, dear mamma;" and Lady Olivia again hid her face with her handkerchief.

"Then take my blessing, both of you, and may all happiness attend your union!" and Lady Wellerby kissed first her daughter, and then her future son-in-law, whom she congratulated on having secured the most warm-hearted and artless creature in the world!

"Artless enough, God knows!" observed Lord Fitzwarren. "Why, only fancy the little simpleton not knowing that I was a fox-hunter."

"Poor child! I have been so strict in the mode of bringing my girls up, that they are much more ignorant in the ways of the world than most young persons of their age."

"Well, confess, Livy," said Lord Fitzwarren, im-

mediately adopting the familiarity of abridging her name, "confess that you have lost your wager."

"I do confess," murmured the delighted Lady Olivia.

"Do you now think you won't have the happiness of going out hunting, eh? *That* you shall, and no occasion to ask mamma's permission, neither. But there's poor Sophy looking as blank and crestfallen as a jockey who has lost his race. You have been distanced, Sophy, but never mind; better luck another time; improve yourself in cutting out horses, and I'll take you down to Melton with Livy next season, and then you'll find plenty of good fellows unmarried;" and he walked up to Lady Sophia and gave her a brotherly salute.

"Settle the matter at once with the old governor," said he, turning to Lady Wellerby. "I hate long courtships; and, as Livy and I have said *done*, I don't see the good of waiting. I'll give her a devilish good settlement, I can tell you. All men on the turf *ought* to make large settlements, and give a good round yearly sum for pin-money, as they call it, to their wives; for when they get out of elbows, as we say—no uncommon thing with us, who stake thousands on a race—it is no bad look-out to have one's wife's allowance to fall back on, and I know some right good fellows, regular goers, who have now nothing else left to depend on."

"I hope, dear Lord Fitzwarren, that you will take advantage and profit by such evil examples, and will not waste your fortune on the turf," said Lady Wellerby, looking alarmed.

"Why, whether I waste it on one green place or

another, the green sward, or the gaming-table, comes much to the same in the end," replied Fitzwarren. "Most men of my rank and fortune try one or the other, and sometimes both. But I'm no greater fool than the rest, and have, besides, the luck to have a capital fellow for my training-groom, who keeps a sharp look-out, and puts me up to every thing going on in the other stables. There is not a racer in any of them that can make a trial, or even take a gallop, that I don't hear of it immediately. No, I'm a knowing one. I can tell you; up to a trick or two. To be sure, it costs me a mint of money to get my information—secret service money, I call it—but it's worth paying for; and my training-groom, an excellent fellow, does the thing as cheaply as he can. You have no idea how clever these training-grooms are. They sleep with their eyes open, I really believe, for they know every thing that's going on in the other stables, by night as well as by day. I have seldom been taken in, so well has my fellow kept a look-out; and when I was, he was fit to go mad. The way it happened was, he got a hint that two horses from other stables were to have a trial. He stole as near as he could get without being seen, and hid behind a hedge, when he saw a white-legged horse going a famous pace, and a black-legged one, which was a favourite, going as slow as a top. This put him out confoundedly, for he did not know the white-legged one, so he made his report to me; I was had, lost a cool five hundred, and discovered afterwards, through one of the boys whom my fellow got hold of, that the white legs were painted, in order to deceive lookers-on. Sometimes the trainers

put shot in the pockets of the jockey to add to the weight, and take in people. It requires a devilish clear head and first-rate abilities to be able to keep one's own on the turf, I can tell you. Talk of the necessity of having clever men to be prime ministers and cabinet councillors, it's all a joke compared to the sharpness required to prevent one's being ruined on the turf. Why, your dearest friend will take you in if he can—ay, by Jove! your brother, if you have one. People talk of authors being clever, and making good books, but it demands fifty times as much cleverness to make a good betting-book."

Lord Fitzwarren was so animated now that he had got on his favourite subject, that he could have talked for hours, and disclosed the whole arcana of the secrets of the stables at Newmarket, which he considered the most important of all topics, had not Lady Wellerby, whose patience was exhausted, interrupted him, by saying, "I hope you will dine with us to-day."

"Can't, 'pon my soul! I ordered dinner this morning—not any more expecting that I was going to pop the question, ay, nor dreaming even of marriage, than that I was to ride a race—got some famous wild boar, and asked some of my countrymen to come and share it. We have all had enough of tame bores here, said I, so for novelty's sake let us try the wild boar. 'Twasn't bad, was it, Livy? They all laughed fit to crack their sides, but especially Webworth, who I thought would never stop, but he did, though, at last, and got me to lend him two hundred pounds."

"I trust, dear Lord Fitzwarren, that when you are a married man you will be more guarded, and not

throw away your money by lending it to your improvident acquaintances," observed Lady Wellerby.

"Whew!" said or rather whistled Lord Fitzwarren, screwing up his lips. "So you call lending a couple of hundreds to a friend less prosperous than myself throwing away my money, do you? Now *I* have a a very different notion on the subject. *I* call it putting out my money to interest, for, if by assisting a friend in a scrape I win his regard, have I not the best of it, eh? Mind, Livy, if you wish me to continue to like you, never try to turn me against my friends, and especially such of them as may stand in need of my help. I could not bear a woman who attempted this, for I have known so many good fellows spoiled and rendered good for nothing by their wives, that it half turned me against matrimony. Why, there was Robinson, a capital fellow before he married, ready to lend a helping hand to any friend in distress, but no sooner did he get a wife than he said—in answer to a letter from poor Webworth, who wrote to him from a lock-up house, whence three hundred would have ransomed him—that he was very sorry, but could not assist him, as he had pledged himself to his wife never to put his name to a bill, or to lend money. He ought to have been ashamed to write it, the snob, but no woman on earth could get me to throw off an old friend in distress, and I should hate her who tried it; so mind, Livy, you now know my mind."

"Dear kind-hearted Lord Fitzwarren!" murmured Lady Olivia, in her most soothing tone of voice, for she observed that the selfish advice of her lady-mother had displeased and irritated her lover.

"I'll meet you to-night at Lady Mangerstien's," said he, and pressing her cheek with a kiss, and nodding to her mother and sister, he departed.

"You are a fortunate girl, Olivia," exclaimed Lady Wellerby, after looking towards the door, and giving time to her future son-in-law to leave the house. "You have thrown your net to some purpose, and caught your fish. It is a flat one, 'tis true; nevertheless, with plenty of mint sauce, it will go down well enough."

"I thought mint sauce was only used with lamb," observed Lady Olivia, with a more impertinent air than she had ever previously assumed towards her mother, with whom she felt offended for having spoken so slightingly of her affianced husband. Not that she experienced towards him any stronger sentiment than on the preceding day, when she had joined her mother and sister in ridiculing him, but *now* she had secured her golden prize, he was *her* property, and she resented his being attacked just as she would have done any abuse of a favourite lap-dog, merely because it *was hers*.

"Well, I don't envy Olivia, I am sure," said Lady Sophia, spitefully.

"What would you give to be in my place, though?" demanded Lady Olivia, with a smile of undisguised triumph. "Forty thousand a-year, three fine places in the country, a good house in town, and the family diamonds, are not things to be despised."

"Certainly not, if one could have them without the man; but he really is such an uncouth, uncivilized creature, that . . ."

"Not more uncouth or uncivilized than those men for whom you have been, during the last ten years, unsuccessfully spreading your nets."

"Have done, Olivia. Sophia, cease to find fault with your sister's future husband," said Lady Wellerby, with a stately air. "You know the field was open to you both. Each tried for him, and, as Olivia has won the prize, you, Sophia, should be pleased instead of being angry."

"*Me* angry, mamma! Well, I am sure I never thought of such a thing; never felt less angry in my life;" and the Lady Sophia burst into tears.

"I am quite certain that if Sophia had caught him I should not have been angry or have cried," observed Lady Olivia, maliciously.

"You are greatly mistaken if you think I am angry, or that my tears have any reference to such a rude, ill-bred fox-hunter, for if *I* had chosen to pretend to dote on horses, to spend my mornings in making drawings of them, and to long to go out hunting, I might have had him instead of you."

"Did you not cut out horses on paper every day while I was drawing them? The only difference between us is, that my efforts succeeded, and yours did not. Probably Lord Fitzwarren saw that your cut paper horses resembled his favourite animals much less than my drawings did. However, let that be as it may, Sophy, you never had the slightest chance, I can tell you."

"Girls, this recrimination is odious—disgusting! You should look on this fortunate chance as an advantage, not to one sister alone, but to both. The

marriage of Olivia to so capital a *parti* will draw attention to you, Sophia, and probably lead to your securing an eligible husband before long. I desire that you become reconciled at once. There, go kiss and be friends, and let not so lucky a day be clouded by jealousies and bickerings."

"I am sure I have no objection," said Lady Olivia, extending her hand to her sister.

"Nor I," pronounced Lady Sophia, coldly returning the proffered kiss. "How I hate her for giving herself such airs at having caught her booby!" thought Lady Sophia.

"How envious and jealous of my good fortune she is!" thought Lady Olivia.

And now papa returned from his diurnal visit to the reading-room; his temper, never good, more than usually ruffled, by having read in the *Morning Post* that the Lord-lieutenancy of his county, become vacant by the death of the Earl of Castlehaven, had been bestowed on Lord Deloraine. He had long anticipated that, when death should release Lord Castlehaven from all sublunary cares and duties, he would be the person selected to fill his place; great, therefore, was his ire at this disappointment, the cause of which he attributed wholly to his absence on the Continent having kept him from giving his wonted support to ministers in the House of Lords, and furnished them with an excuse for passing over his former claims, and appointing his enemy to the post he coveted. His absence was all the work of Lady Wellerby, and what good had it accomplished? Were his daughters any nearer being married? No; their chance seemed as

remote as ever, and, as he dwelt on these annoyances, his wrath increased, and he longed to pour its vials on the devoted head of his wife, whose recent demands for an advance on her pin-money again recurring to his memory, added fuel to the fire of his anger. His contracted brow, flashing eyes, and crimsoned cheek, betrayed, the moment he had entered the room, the tempest that was working in his heart; and had not his lady-wife felt that she had a balm to impart which would act on his wrath like oil thrown on the stormy waves, she would have trembled. Knowing that if once the hurricane burst, it would be difficult to check its fury, she approached him joyfully, and exclaimed. "Good news! good news!"

"Stuff, nonsense! Don't talk to me of good news! what new folly have you got in your head now?"

"No stuff, no nonsense, Lord Wellerby," and his lady-wife drew herself up to her utmost height. "Never again accuse me of not being a provident, ay, and a clever mother, too. Lord Fitzwarren has proposed for Olivia!"

"The devil he has! Is it sure, certain—no mistake again? You remember how you and Sophy fancied that Sir Thomas Marston had proposed to her, because he made some foolish speeches to her when he was tipsy."

"*There is*, there *can* be no mistake *now*, for Lord Fitzwarren has spoken to *me*, and asked me to tell you that he wished to have the marriage take place as soon as possible."

"A good job—a devilish good job! Did he say anything about expecting a fortune? I have no money

to come down with—a trifle at my death—nothing more."

"He never referred to the subject, and I dare say never will; he only said that he wished to secure a large jointure, and liberal pin-money to Olivia."

"More fool he! But that's *his* affair, and not mine; he'll know better before he comes to my age. Well, well, I'm very glad of this match. Getting one daughter well off our hands may help to get off the other, and then we may live quietly at home at Wellerby Hall, and save money, instead of racketing about from place to place, without any comfort, eating bad meat and drinking sour wines enough to spoil one's stomach. There's old Castlehaven dead, and the lord-lieutenancy given to Deloraine instead of to me. All this comes from living abroad."

"But see what a brilliant marriage Olivia has secured; and this, too, comes from our living abroad. In London she never would have had such a chance, for there men have their clubs, and their omnibus-boxes at the theatres, and lead such gay lives, that they have no time to think of marrying."

"There may be something in that," said Lord Wellerby; and his wife for the nonce escaped the angry reproaches he had determined on making her.

"How delightful it is for us to get Olivia so well settled in life, isn't it, my dear?" said she.

"Yes, I must say it is. It will be a great saving of expense, for the dress of a girl now-a-days costs an enormous sum; and another consideration is, I shall be more comfortable when travelling, for I can get my feet on her vacant place, and that will be a great relief

to my legs, which used to suffer so much from being cramped up in our coach."

"Yes, it is a real happiness to have our daughter secure so brilliant a marriage, and to think how angry and jealous it will make all our friends and acquaintances, who have been hawking their girls about for years, in order to try to get them off their hands."

"For the matter of that, so have we, and a pretty sum it has cost me."

"You surely cannot regret it, my lord, when the result has been so fortunate? But, *à-propos* of expense, I must call on you to loose your purse-strings, and let me have some money."

"Money, money, always money! If things go ill, you ask for money; and when things go well, you also demand it. There is no end to the folly and extravagance of women. Happy are they who keep aloof from them, and are spared the plague of wives and daughters."

"This is unkind, Lord Wellerby, I must say; and more especially when my constant and arduous endeavours to secure an advantageous marriage for your daughter have been just crowned with success."

"*My* daughter, Lady Wellerby! She is as much *your* daughter as mine, and it was as much for your own interest as for mine that you made the exertions for which you take such wonderful credit."

"It is no use bickering, Lord Wellerby, and therefore let us come to the point. It is indispensably necessary for me to have money, in order that Olivia should have some new dresses to appear in, now that all eyes will be turned on her as the *fiancée* of Lord Fitzwarren."

"I don't see the necessity, and, what's more, Lady Wellerby, I *won't* see the necessity. If she caught the man in the dresses she has, it is quite evident that the great end and aim of all dress is accomplished, and a fig for what others may say or think on the subject. Besides, as she must have a regular fit-out for her marriage, which you must take care her *husband's* purse, and not mine, is to suffer for, it would only be throwing away money to buy her any gowns or other gimcracks at present."

"You would not surely be so illiberal, so mean, as to throw the expense of her *trousseau and corbeille de mariage* on Lord Fitzwarren?"

"Most certainly I will."

"It will be an unprecedented thing."

"Not altogether, for your lady-mother did the same by me. I was young and inexperienced then, so I was taken in, and now I will make my reprisal. I discovered afterwards that your father, good-natured, easy man, had given your mother three hundred pounds to rig you out, but she put it in her pocket, and made me pay for all."

"I did not expect, Lord Wellerby, that you would asperse the memory of my poor mother," and Lady Wellerby put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Asperse her! not I — never meant such a thing. I think she acted a wise part, and I want you to follow her example in making this young man do what I did thirty-five years ago, and for which you would require no prompting if you could pocket three hundred pounds, as your mother did, but which I'm too sharp to let you do. No; I'll make a bargain with you—I'll give you

a hundred pounds for yourself, as a sort of per centage for getting Olivia off our hands, and if you get rid of Sophy I'll give you another. This young man is very rich and liberal, and knows nothing of what is the usual custom on such occasions. You can easily make him understand that he is to furnish everything, we providing him only with a wife ; and if you could just get him to throw in a supply for Sophy it will be all the better."

"It will require great tact to manage all this, Lord Wellerby ; but no one has ever accused me of want of that, when the happiness and interest of my husband and children are at stake ; but you will, I trust, let me have the hundred pounds at once."

"But if the match should by any chance go off! You know the old proverb : 'Many things between the cup and the lip.'"

"Nothing can prevent it."

"Well, then, you shall have it to-morrow." And so saying Lord Wellerby retreated, dreading that, should he remain longer, his *cara sposa* might make some fresh demand on his purse. "She is not such a fool, after all, as I took her to be," murmured he to himself, as he strolled up to the Monte Pincio. "She has managed this affair very cleverly, I must say, and deserves credit for it ; but I must not let her see that I think so highly of her management in the business. Women can't stand being praised ; it puts them above themselves directly, and they expect to have all their unreasonable demands complied with ; the best of them are but foolish, weak creatures, after all ; always agog after some whim or other. I suspect my lady has been

losing at cards lately; she did not say so, because she knew it would only draw a severe lecture from me. I have no patience with women playing for more than sixpences. Why I, who play as steady a game as most men, have lost this week about two hundred pounds, though I only played half-pound points, and betted a pound on the rubber. But I had such a confounded run of ill-luck against me — but it can't last, that's one thing, and I'll have my revenge to-night. I must put a stop to my wife's card-playing, if I find she has been losing, for I won't stand such goings-on. I fear this young fellow, Fitzwarren, is a wild chap; but, *n'importe*, I'll have Olivia's marriage settlements and pin-money well taken care of; and, if he chooses to ruin himself, she will, at all events, be safe, and not be returned on my hands."

CHAPTER IX.

Some madly rush into the marriage state
As if impell'd by a decree of fate,
Lur'd on by beauty, short liv'd as the flow'r
That fades, and withers in autumnal hour;
Or by ambition, avarice, or pride,
How many have been led to seek a bride—
Thoughtless of qualities of mind or heart,
To sweeten life when beauty shall depart;
Or when the gauds of pride and riches fade,
And man no longer is the dupe they made!
But still more mad are they, by folly led,
Who, without love, esteem, or prudence, wed.

"Have you heard the news?" said Strathern to Mrs. Sydney, the first salutation having passed, the morning after the impromptu proposal of Lord Fitzwarren to the Lady Olivia Wellerby.

"Is it really true, or are you jesting?"

"Perfectly true, I assure you. It was announced last night at Lady Mangerstein's party, by Lady Wellerby, and the affianced lovers enacted the *rôle à merveille*. Fitzwarren, however, came to my room after, and, the excitement of the first few hours having subsided, he declared to me that now it was all settled,

he had not the least notion how it had been brought about. 'Hang me, if I know how it was done,' were his precise words, 'for when I went there in the morning to call, I had no more idea of proposing for Livy than of flying, and what put it into my head I can't for the life of me tell. I wish I hadn't been in such a confounded hurry, for the chances are, if I had taken time to consider, I never should have proposed at all. And now that poor girl Sophy looks so unhappy that I did not choose her, that it gives me pain to see her. You know the old saying of Sir Robert Walpole's, the minister, that when he bestowed a place or a pension, he made a thousand foes, and one person ungrateful. I hope this won't be my case, for it would be too bad if all the girls I flirted with turn enemies, and Livy prove ungrateful. One thing is certain, and that is, Sophy is terribly cut up. Poor soul! I wish I could persuade some fellow to have her to console her for seeing Livy preferred.'"

Mrs. Sydney and Louisa could not resist laughing at Strathern's clever imitation of Lord Fitzwarren, and he, thus encouraged, proceeded to repeat the rest of the conversation.

"'But if you went to call on Lady Wellerby without any notion of proposing,' asked I, 'what led you to do so?'

"'Why, that's precisely what I can't make out myself; but I think it was because Livy took such pains to please me in drawing a horse, and expressed such a love for those fine animals, and such a longing desire to go out hunting, that I took pity on the poor girl, and, to secure her the enjoyments she coveted,

proposed for her. I had a wager with her, too, and that urged me on.'"

"Absurd as all this is, you will observe," resumed Strathern, "that kindness of heart led poor Fitzwarren to commit this piece of folly, which will, in all probability, entail much unhappiness on him, for Lady Olivia is not, in my opinion, a woman calculated to render him a wiser or a better man."

"Marriage is a lottery," said Mr. Rhymer, who had entered while Strathern was repeating Fitzwarren's conversation, "in which there are more blanks than prizes."

"It can only be so considered," observed Mrs. Sydney, "when the drawers are, like those who draw lottery-tickets, blindfolded, by which I mean, when persons marry before they are really acquainted with each other's tempers, dispositions, habits, and pursuits, on which knowledge happiness so much depends. A man becomes suddenly captivated with a beautiful girl. He sees her gentle and lady-like, as most women in society are, and he believes her to be as amiable as she is handsome; all men in love have the same belief. The girl, unless she happens to possess more good sense and reflection than fall to the lot of most young persons of her sex, satisfied by being beloved, and grateful for the preference accorded to her, liberally endows her lover with every excellent quality, and thus, under the influence of a mutual illusion, they marry. How few, even of the best people, can justify the exaggerated notions and expectations entertained of them previously to marriage! Every day, nay, every hour, rends asunder the veil

that had concealed errors and defects never suspected to have existed, and the disappointment experienced leads to a sense of bitterness, very unlikely to extenuate the faults discovered, or to amend them by the exercise of that patience and good nature so needed to sweeten domestic life. The man who absurdly expected to find the lovely creature he had wedded faultless will, when defects are revealed, be prone to sink her from the angel he believed her to be to the very opposite of an angelical nature; and the woman who fancied her lover the perfection of mankind will be apt to think the husband who betrays his detection of her fallibility anything but delightful. Hence a fertile field for dissensions is sown, and life afterwards offers the wretched prospect of disappointed hopes, and perpetual difference of opinions."

"You have drawn a gloomy picture, my good lady," said Rhymer, "and, were I not long past the age when such a topic could personally interest me, I should lay it to my heart. I hope it will not appal those," and he glanced from Miss Sydney to Strathern, "whom it may more concern."

"Mrs. Sydney has only stated the case of persons who marry, without really knowing each other's characters, dispositions, and habits," observed Strathern.

"But is not love painted blind to denote that he can see no faults?" remarked Mr. Rhymer.

"The love that sees no faults is the love of weak boys and girls, and is little calculated to endure; but the affection that can continue after the knowledge of them is acquired, that can seek to amend, and bear them with indulgence, is the true, the rational love—

the only sure foundation on which conjugal happiness can be based," said Mrs. Sydney.

"What is your opinion on this subject, fair young lady?" asked Mr. Rhymer, addressing himself to Miss Sydney. "Would *you* pardon the lover who could detect a fault in you? Mind, I assert that to do so would be impossible, for *heiresses* are never known to have any while they remain unmarried."

Louisa Sydney blushed, and bit her lip, for every allusion to *heiresses* pained and mortified her. "To suppose heiresses free from faults would be as foolish as to think that men of large fortunes had none. The only difference, in my opinion, between the rich and poor is, that wealth, by giving the power of gratifying one's inclinations, and rendering its possessor, to a certain degree, independent of others, exposes him to yield to temptations of self-indulgence from which the poor are exempt, and, by exciting envy and jealousy, causes his errors to be drawn more into notice."

"But self-indulgence, fair casuist, comprises in itself a whole arcana of evil."

"Does not that depend on whether the propensities indulged in are wrong?"

"Certainly," said Strathern, "for our noble ones ought to be ever encouraged. Some—the number is not limited — have more enjoyment in dispensing the goods of fortune on those requiring them than in expending their wealth in their own pleasures."

"But may not those very generous persons be influenced by ostentation, pride, and vanity, in thus distributing their wealth?" asked Mr. Rhymer.

"Why should we seek to attribute their liberality to such unworthy motives?" said Strathern.

"Would it not be wiser to be satisfied with the good they bestow, than to analyze the motive?" observed Mrs. Sydney.

"If you join with your fair daughter and Strathern against me, I shall have no chance in the argument," replied Mr. Rhymer. "Nevertheless, I must remind you that you have all wandered widely from the starting-post, my hypothesis being, that ladies would be little disposed to pardon the lover who *hinted* at a fault, and my supposition that heiresses never could have any until they married. But, bless me! I forget that I have an engagement with the Abbate Manfredi at four o'clock; and your *pendule* reminds me that it now only wants a quarter to that hour. I leave my friend Strathern to continue the subject, and I have no doubt he will satisfactorily prove to Miss Sydney that she is and always must be in the right;" and, with a glance full of irony, Mr. Rhymer took his departure.

"How completely he possesses the art of making all with whom he converses dissatisfied with themselves!" observed Mrs. Sydney.

"Dissatisfied with him, I should say," replied Louisa. "I am glad he did not offer his services to escort us to the Vatican, for he would have endeavoured to prove to us that whatever we chanced to admire was precisely that which was least worthy of admiration, and so spoil our enjoyment there."

"Poor Rhymer!" said Strathern; "for poor he is,

with all that might render him happy, except the healthful appetite for happiness. But I excuse his cynicism, from the conviction that it originates in a physical cause—viz. a diseased stomach, which has made more cynics than all the moral causes so frequently assigned for them put together."

Strathern's carriage followed Mrs. Sydney's to the Vatican; and he was handing both the ladies from theirs, when Lady Wellerby, her daughters, and Lord Fitzwarren, came up to the spot. Fitzwarren looked confused at the meeting, but not so the Lady Olivia, who leant on his arm, and assumed an air of triumph as she glanced at Louisa Sydney.

"I am sure, Mrs. Sydney, you will be glad to hear of the approaching nuptials of my daughter Olivia and Lord Fitzwarren," said Lady Wellerby. "A long attachment on his part," whispered she, "but he was so sly about it that I did not until lately suspect its existence; and Olivia is so guarded that, until he had positively proposed, she never named it to me."

Mrs. Sydney having made the usual and expected civil speech in reply, Lady Wellerby resumed, "Yes, I was sure you would be glad; the truth is, Olivia and Sophia have refused so many offers, and are so very fastidious, that I really began to fear they would accept no one; Lord Fitzwarren, however, there was no resisting. He is in every way unexceptionable, and so gifted, so clever and amusing, that no girl could refuse him. Only think how cunning he was. Oh, those men! he paid attention to other young ladies, while he thought only of Olivia,

just, as he now confesses, to see what effect it would have on her. And she, poor dear creature, showed such delicacy and self-command that he was vanquished, and proposed for her a month sooner than he intended."

"I wonder you are not tired of coming to the Vatican," said Lady Olivia to Louisa Sydney; "I think it the most tiresome place in the world, don't I, Lord Fitzwarren?"

"Yes, and so do I too, Livy, except St. Peter's. Strathern does not think so, I know, for he is never tired of looking at all the statues, and vases, and stone coffins, with figures carved on them. What do they call them—sarco....?"

"Sarcophaguses," said Lady Olivia.

"Yes, sarcophaguses—I always forget the name. But, I say, Strathern, they are much better than our mode of burying people—the deal shell, the leaden coffin, and the mahogany one, covered with velvet, and silver nails, and coronets, for no good that I could ever see, but just for the rats and moths to destroy."

"Oh, dreadful! How can you, George, talk of any thing so horrible!" exclaimed Lady Olivia.

"Hang me, if I haven't a great mind to buy one of those sarco—sarcophaguses, and have it sent to England, to be ready when I kick the bucket; and, if I find one with any carvings of a fox-chase, I will, too, for that would be just the thing for me."

"Really, dear Fitzwarren, you will make me quite ill if you talk in this dreadful manner," said Lady Olivia.

"Why, you know, Livy, we must all die one day

or other—we can't help it, do all we can—and one may as well have the stone coffin ready."

Lady Wellerby having released Mrs. Sydney from the confidential whispering, in which she revealed many things, and made many boasts that had no existence except in her own fertile brain, Louisa and Strathern were freed from witnessing the affected demonstrations of affection lavished, in looks even more than in words, by Lady Olivia on her betrothed husband, and the undisguised ill humour of Lady Sophia, who glanced spitefully at her sister, and opened not her lips during the time they were together.

"A devilish fine girl, after all!" said Fitzwarren, as he turned to look back at Miss Sydney; "it's a pity she is so shy and skittish." And he sighed deeply, to the no small annoyance of his intended bride, who, however, thought it more prudent to conceal the displeasure she felt.

Louisa Sydney could not resist a smile when the Wellerby party left them, and Strathern did more, for, albeit unaccustomed to indulge much in laughter, he positively could not control his risible muscles. Mrs. Sydney too joined in the hilarity, being greatly amused by the attempts made by Lady Wellerby to prove that Lord Fitzwarren had never thought of proposing for any one but Lady Olivia, and that his attachment to her had been of long date.

The passion with which Louisa Sydney had inspired Strathern increased daily, and as her reserve wore away he discovered in her such fine and noble qualities that he felt his happiness wholly depended

on her. Though he confessed not his love, his every glance revealed it; and she now smiled when she recollected her suspicion of her mother having been the object of his attention, and learned to value the conquest she had achieved. It was impossible to know Strathern well without liking him. High-minded, generous, and warm-hearted, with manners unaffected and highly-polished, he possessed a peculiarly sweet and even temper, and these qualities made themselves duly appreciated, as they became unfolded in daily intercourse with those he liked. Pride, or rather a self-respect, carried to a degree that rendered him painfully susceptible at any implied doubt of his principles, and almost implacable towards those who betrayed such a doubt, was his besetting sin, and to this was added a craving ambition to be loved for himself alone, that quite equalled the similar desire experienced by the object of his affection. Regardless of her wealth for itself, he was not sorry that she was rich, for should he win her hand it would preclude all doubt from his mind that he was preferred from mercenary motives, and the frequent examples he had seen of the all-powerful influence of this sordid sentiment had rendered him somewhat suspicious of the preferences accorded by portionless girls to wealthy suitors. But while he was glad that *he* was saved all ground for doubt on this point, it never once occurred to him that she he loved could entertain even the shadow of one relative to *his* motives. Was he not rich enough to be exempt from suspicion? and was not Louisa lovely enough to win him to her feet, were she poor? Yes, he would have sought her hand

as a treasure above all price, had she been wholly unprovided with the gift of fortune; and so certain did he feel of this, that he only remembered she was an heiress in the pleasure of that fortuitous circumstance excluding doubt of her being influenced by mercenary motives. The sympathy in their tastes and sentiments, long apparent to Mrs. Sydney, was now felt by both Strathern and Louisa. Often would she exclaim, when she heard him express opinions perfectly in unison with her own, "Yes, I was certain you would think so;" and he would yield a ready assent to *her* anticipated notions of *his*.

As the new-born and all-engrossing passion of love developed itself in the breast of the fair Louisa, existence assumed a brighter aspect for her. Nature seemed to have put on new charms; the very air was lighter, and visions of happiness floated through her mind. Where now were all the resolutions she had formed of coldly and deliberately examining into the disposition and sentiments of Strathern before she yielded to him her heart? That heart was now irrevocably his, and she could no more recal it than if she had never been its mistress. This affection, which had grown into life so gradually, was in full vigour before she was aware of its extent and power, and was now so closely interwoven with her every dream and hope of happiness that to tear it from her heart would be to destroy her peace for ever. Her mother would smile as she noticed the more than usual care bestowed of late on her *toilette* by Louisa, and the deference she evinced to the taste of Strathern. He had observed one day that his favourite colours were pale pink, blue,

and lilac ; and from that hour those hues were in turn invariably adopted by the lovely girl in the ribands she wore.

O, Love ! how powerful is thy empire on youthful hearts ; and how canst thou deck all in thine own gay and brilliant tints ! To awake in the morning with the certainty of meeting the object beloved in the day, and to close the eyes at night to dream of him, is in itself happiness enough to satisfy for a long time the young and pure breast of her who loves for the first time, and believes in the indestructibility of the passion with which she is inspired.

Strathern's approach made her heart beat quicker ; his presence filled her soul with gladness ; and, content with the present, she asked not, thought not, what the future might bring. How did Strathern delight in the change operated in the idol of his affection ! Now were fully unfolded to him the charms of her mind, so long concealed beneath the reserve she had during so many weeks maintained, and her sparkling and playful vivacity, which invested her with new attractions, rendered her more captivating than ever.

Strathern was not a vain man, and, like all who truly love, he was not confident of success, and consequently his dread of prematurely avowing his passion prevented him from seeing what any one less interested in the affair must have guessed, namely, that he need not fear a refusal. This modesty on his part better served his interest with Louisa Sydney than any other line of conduct could have done ; and, had he been an artful instead of a high-minded lover, he could not have hit on a more effectual mode of subjugating her

he sought to win. Women with refined sentiments and proud minds are flattered by timidity in their suitors, and are much more disposed to bestow their heart on him who appears to doubt his chance of obtaining the gift than on one who seems sure of it. The generosity of the female character, too, is called into action by timidity, while its pride is alarmed by confidence and assurance in a lover. Louisa felt that she was beloved. A thousand indescribable but satisfactory proofs daily conveyed this delightful conviction to her breast. The heart has its instincts as well as the reason, and all the efforts of the last would have been unavailing to remove the impression of the first. She passed some hours of every day in the society of Strathern. She met his earnest gaze fixed on her face with an expression of tenderness not to be mistaken, and she saw that she occupied his whole attention. Yet he avowed not his passion; and, as day by day flew rapidly by, and the season for leaving Rome advanced, she became conscious of an anxiety and agitation, not unmingled with dread, lest some obstacle existed to prevent the declaration on which she felt her happiness now depended. Her changeful cheek, her downcast eye, revealed to Strathern that the moment was come to claim that hand for which he had so long and ardently sighed, and he determined to seize the first opportunity chance might offer to declare his devotion to the lovely Louisa. Something in his manner betrayed to her what was passing in his mind; and now, with that shyness and modesty inherent in the female heart, she trembled at the approach of that avowal for which she had lately so anxiously longed, and bashfully

avoided affording the opportunity which it was evident Strathern sought of revealing his feelings to her. This coyness on her part invested her whole manner with a new grace. No longer was Louisa the reserved and somewhat haughty heiress, questioning the motives of her adorers, and betraying her disdain for those she suspected of mercenary ones. She was now the bashful, timid girl, tremblingly alive to the consciousness of loving and being loved, and as wholly forgetful as her admirer himself of her wealth, and the attraction it might furnish.

The opportunity Strathern sought offered itself a few days after he had determined on avowing his affection to its object. A visit to the Pamphilia Gardens having been proposed by Mrs. Sydney, Strathern attended them there. On arriving, they encountered Lady Melbrook, who joined them, and, wholly occupying Mrs. Sydney's attention, left Strathern time to speak to Louisa alone, as she walked after her mother. "Will you pardon me," said he, "if I snatch this occasion of addressing you on the subject most dear to my heart. I have long panted for an opportunity of revealing that which you, most beloved Miss Sydney, must have guessed."

"O, Mr. Strathern! not now, another time," said Louisa, blushing like a rose when first its leaves open to the sun.

"Only say that I am not wholly indifferent to you, that I may hope, dear lovely Louisa—one word to make me the happiest man on earth. You turn from me—you will not tell me I may hope!"

Louisa looked at him, and as her beautiful eyes

met his they revealed more eloquently than words could have done all that was passing in her soul. She gave him her hand, which trembled with emotion; he raised it for a moment to his lips, and in that brief interval both felt that their destinies were sealed—were indissolubly united. Tears sparkled in the dark and lustrous eyes of Louisa, and gemmed those delicate blushing cheeks on which they shone like orient pearls on a rose-leaf. She applied her handkerchief to remove them, and when she had done so, Strathern begged so earnestly to have it that it was accorded to him, and after being repeatedly pressed to his lips, was consigned to his breast. "May I speak to your mother, dearest, best Louisa?" whispered he.

"Yes," was softly murmured, and never had that monosyllable sounded so sweetly in his ears before. How fair seemed now the scene around the lovers! The luxuriant plants and odorous flowers, the rich foliage and the limpid waters of the fountains, never before looked so beautiful; nay, even the formal hedges of privet and box no longer appeared tame and artificial, and the green lizards, as they sported in the slanting sunbeams on the walls, instead of being merely a bright green as usual, seemed to glitter like emeralds.

"Let me hear the sound of that dear voice again. Speak to me, adored Louisa! Call me Henry, for I long to hear my name pronounced by those dear, beautiful lips."

"Henry, dear Henry!" whispered Louisa, in accents so soft, so full of tenderness, that her lover longed to throw himself on his knees, and to thank

her, by pressing those small and exquisitely formed feet to his lips. Both felt that to be the happiest hour of their lives. All fear and doubt were now removed, and, confident in the affection of each other, the present was blissful, and the future offered to them only bright and boundless vistas of endless, illimitable love and felicity.

"Do not let me go to Lady Mangerstein's to-night, dearest, but let me come and spend the evening with you and your mother. I know Mrs. Sydney prefers staying at home, and I should not like to find myself in a crowd the evening of *le plus beau jour de ma vie*."

"I, too, could not bear to go," said Louisa, and her lover thanked her with his eyes.

Mrs. Sydney turned to speak to her daughter, and, with the quick perception peculiar to women, at once saw that something had greatly excited her feelings. But she perceived also, by Louisa's smile, that whatever had occurred was of a pleasurable nature, and the fond mother was content.

Strathern seemed to tread on air for the rest of the day, so elated were his spirits at the result of his brief *tête-à-tête* with the beautiful Louisa. His passion for her had positively increased since he had learned that he was dear to her, for gratitude was now added to the other motives for attachment which had previously existed in his heart for this lovely and amiable girl. How few men of the present day, in whom vanity and self-appreciation are such prevalent characteristics, would have experienced or even understood the feelings that filled his breast on this occasion! Most of his contemporaries would have deemed that

it was the young lady selected who was to be grateful, and not the lover, little dreaming that the preference accorded by a youthful and pure-minded girl is a blessing, the sense of which never should be forgotten by him who is so fortunate as to have gained it. They judge the hearts of women by their own; consequently it is not to be wondered at that they do not greatly prize such gifts, nor long retain them. Strathern was widely different from this herd of vain and selfish triflers, and was as grateful to Louisa Sydney for her acceptance of his vows as if he possessed not a single claim to justify his pretensions to her favour; nor, though now assured of her preference, was he, like the generality of young men, disposed to take less pains to please her than heretofore. No, he would prove to her that she had not bestowed her heart on one who was insensible to the inestimable value of the gift, and his whole life should be devoted to the study of her happiness. As he entered his apartment, he desired that no visitor should be admitted, and threw himself into a chair, that he might, free from interruption, give way to the indulgence of the blissful emotions that filled his soul. In that chamber, how many anxious cares, how many doubts and fears, had he known since he had learned to love the fair Louisa; how often had her reserve and coldness sent him back to it in despair, to recal every look of hers that checked, every word that chilled, his new-born, but faint hopes! And now all fears were over. She had sanctioned his affection—nay, more, had let him see it was reciprocal. How he blessed her for it! and the present, blissful as it was, would be followed by happi-

ness still greater—that of her becoming wholly his; and had he not cause to be grateful to the lovely being who had thus thrown the sunshine of her love over his life, and rendered all that had been hitherto tame and joyless bright and glowing?

CHAPTER X.

Wealth, fame, and honours, what are ye but toys,
That lure the man, as playthings lur'd the boy?
As worthless, and as brief, the joys ye give:
For age, with its infirmities, soon comes,
And when it racks your frames, and chills your hearts,
What then avails that honour, fame, and wealth
Are yours? They cannot lull disease, or pain,
Or bribe the tyrant Death, who hovers near,
To grant one little hour to waning life.

We left Lord Alexander Beaulieu meditating on the best mode of making the acquaintance of Mrs. Maclaurin, the widow of the rich stockbroker. As a preparatory step to this desired end, he that day took possession of apartments in the hotel where she had fixed her abode, thinking that so close a vicinity to her might furnish him with some opportunity of accomplishing the object which he had in view, and if chance assisted him not, he determined on relying on his own wit, ever fruitful in making, as well as adroit in seizing, opportunities for carrying his plans into effect. Decided on storming the citadel, he, like an experienced general, first proceeded to reconnoitre

the outposts, and so directed his attention to the *entourage* of the widow. A *dame de compagnie*, in the person of a middle-aged woman, whose poverty, and not whose will, had induced her to consent to fill that situation, was the humble companion of Mrs. Maclaurin, and humble, indeed, was the luckless person, or she would not long have occupied it, for the lady whose salary she received, and whose bread she ate, was not one who would permit freedom of thought, speech, or action, to any one dependant on her. Mrs. Bernard, for so was the unfortunate companion named, was a woman who had been severely schooled in adversity. Steeped in poverty to its very dregs, she had learned that though the bread of dependance is bitter, it is, nevertheless, infinitely better than having no bread at all; and with this conviction, which had been forced on her by sad experience, her sole object was to conciliate Mrs. Maclaurin, and, by rendering herself necessary to that lady, to secure a permanent position in her establishment. Mrs. Bernard, the orphan daughter of a poor clergyman, had in early life married the curate of her father, who soon left her a widow, to fight her way through a pitiless world, by earning a scanty subsistence in the capacity of humble friend or dependant to such ladies as were unblessed with daughters, nieces, or cousins, to render companionship in their homes. Much had Mrs. Bernard suffered in the various dwellings into which her evil destiny had thrown her, and patiently had she endured these trials. Delicate in health, and broken in spirit, she submitted to treatment, the injustice of which inflicted many a pang, while she scrupulously con-

cealed every symptom of dissatisfaction from those at whose hands she received it, well aware that neither remonstrance nor entreaty would procure any amelioration to her condition.

Heroism is not confined to the great ones of the earth, or to men alone. Often is it found in the poor and humble, and exemplified in the constancy with which, Spartan-like, they hide that which is preying on their hearts. How many a pale cheek, attenuated form, and downcast eye, reveals the grief which the tongue never utters, and betrays the sorrow hushed in the day, and indulged only when night gives a few hours of solitude—that boon so prized by those whose time appertains to another! In all the situations held by Mrs. Bernard, it had been discovered by those she served that she was dull and unamusing. One lady declared that her melancholy countenance gave her the vapours, yet never tried by kindness to render it less sad. A second said she was so inanimate and monotonous, that her presence invariably cast a gloom wherever she appeared; and a third asserted that she believed Mrs. Bernard had no feeling, she bore being scolded with such composure; while a fourth dismissed her on having one day observed a tear, which she had vainly endeavoured to check, steal down her cheek when severely reproved for some trivial forgetfulness, alleging that she disliked sulky dispositions. In one family she had lost her situation because the lady's *femme de chambre* had threatened to leave, unless, as she stated, that mopish toady, who was obliged to say yes or no just as her mistress wished, was discharged, for *she* had no idea of submitting to her inso-

lence in not coming to the housekeeper's room to take a sociable cup of tea, or a hand at cards when left at home by her lady.

What woman, and, above all, one of a certain age, and fond of dress, could hesitate between parting with a *dame de compagnie*, who only served to write her notes, read her to sleep, ring the bell, and bear her ill-humour, and a *femme de chambre* initiated in all the secrets of her mistress's personal defects, and well versed in the mysteries of the *toilette* essential for concealing them—one who possessed the art of making false hair look very like the natural growth of the head when seen at a distance, who applied pearl powder and rouge so artistically as to induce, at least, the wearer to believe that they might deceive others for the hues of youth and health, and who could remedy the want of *embonpoint* by the judicious application of cotton and muslin, or dispose of any unbecoming superfluity of it so judiciously as to give to fat ladies some appearance of a shape. If women capable of making such sacrifices as to resign such skilful *femmes de chambre* do exist, Mrs. Bernard had not been so fortunate as to find them, and she soon became convinced that the *rôle* of lady's-maid was a much more important one in an establishment than that of *dame de compagnie*, who though in presence is never *of* the company. But when she received her *congé* from a situation where she had borne and forborne as never human being before had done, because the lapdog of the lady had bitten her so severely that he had actually taken out a piece from her leg, and that his mistress declared she 'feared it would make poor dear

Fidelle sick,' the unhappy woman arrived at the conclusion that not only ladies'-maids but *even* lapdogs were more necessary to their owners than *dames de compagnie*, a conviction which rendered her still more dispirited and humble. Mrs. Bernard esteemed herself fortunate when engaged by Mrs. Maclaurin to accompany her to Italy. The well-known wealth of that lady, and an appearance of good humour in her manner, led her to suppose that with her she might escape some, if not all, of the trials and annoyances which she had encountered in the situations she had previously filled. The history of the *parvenue* widow was well known in the English world, her vast wealth and profuse expenditure having excited much attention, and, as is usually the case on such occasions, having drawn many animadversions to her origin. But the *on-dits* relative to this reputed female Crœsus, while they rendered Mrs. Bernard aware that she was low-born, uneducated, and ill-bred, led her to hope that one who had been so prosperous would prove kind-hearted and good-natured, and with this hope she entered her establishment.

Mrs. Maclaurin was of Irish extraction, or, as she herself termed it, of Irish *distraction*. Hired in a provincial town in her native country as nurserymaid in the family of Colonel Fairfax, whose regiment was stationed there, she conducted herself so well that, when the regiment was recalled to England, she, nothing loth, accompanied his family to London, being, as she expressed herself to her fellow-servants, anxious to see England, and hoping to make her fortune. They laughed at this idea, little thinking

there was any chance of its being realised, for Molly Malowny was neither handsome in her person nor engaging in her manner. She possessed, however, one gift, and that was her voice—clear, soft, and harmonious, she sang the ballads of her native land with a sweetness of which not even the strong brogue peculiar to her class could impair the effect. She founded her hope of success in life on this solitary attraction, and was, therefore, anxious to display it whenever she could. By it she soothed the children of Colonel Fairfax to sleep, and so accustomed did they become to her melodious lullaby, that they refused to slumber without it. Their attachment to Molly conciliated the good-will of their parents towards her, though they were not blind to a certain degree of violence of temper, obstinacy, and false pride but too frequently observable in her.

On a visit to Brighton one autumn, where Molly attended her mistress and the children, chance led to their taking up their abode in an hotel where lodged the rich Mr. Maclaurin, a well-known stockbroker of London. His apartments happened to be the next to those occupied by the children of Colonel Fairfax, and Molly's nightly lullaby was as distinctly heard by that gentleman as by those to whom it was addressed, and produced as soothing an influence. The child of Scots parents settled in trade in Ireland, Mr. Maclaurin first saw the light in the Emerald Isle, and though he left it to enter as a clerk in a mercantile office in London when he was in his seventeenth year, and that now he had reached his seventieth, his ear quickly recalled the sweet and plaintive songs to

which it had been familiar in his youth, and with them came back the memory of that joyous period, awakening the first tender feelings he had experienced for long, long years. He was surprised to find his eyes moistened as he listened to the dulcet harmony of the olden time, and drank in the notes with a pleasure, pensive though it was, which the finest Italian music, sung by the most admired *prima donnas* of the opera, had failed to excite. When the strain ceased, how he yearned to hear it again, and longed to know who the syren was that had so charmed him! He dreamt that night of the days of his youth, of the wild mountains, green valleys, and clear streams, amid which his childhood had been passed. The cells of memory, closed for above half a century, opened, as it were, by the hand of an enchanter, gave forth images and feelings which long, long had slumbered, and the old man was again, in imagination at least, invested with something of the warm feelings of other and happier days, ere he had learned to bestow every thought on the accumulation of gold, and find enjoyment only in hoarding it. And the enchanter who worked this miracle was no other than the clear, sweet, but uncultivated voice issuing from the larynx of Molly Malowny, who, unconscious of the effect she was producing, "warbled her wood-notes wild" for the sole purpose of inducing the slumber of her youthful charge.

"Who sleeps in the next room to me, Donald?" demanded Mr. Maclaurin when his servant entered his chamber the morning after he had first heard Molly's song.

"In gude troth, sir, I dinna exactly ken," replied the Scotsman.

"I wish you would inquire, then," said his master.

"Weel, I'll do sae, sir, when I go to order your breekfast."

"Go now, this moment, and find out."

"Hoot awa!" muttered Donald as he proceeded on his errand; "I dinna ken what the auld mon wants. It is clear he has got a bee in his bonnet, puir auld creetur; but he munna be fashed, so I maun e'en gang my gaits and inquire."

The chambermaid revealed to Donald that the occupants of the bed-room next to his master's were the children of Colonel Fairfax.

"Ay, there's the mischief. Bairns always make sic an ado; I warrant me they have disturbed the maister, and I must say it was nae over wise of ye to put the wee folk sae near an auld mon who isn't used to the like, so find anither chamber for them, or e'en give me maister ane."

"You are as slow as a top, Donald," said Mr. Maclaurin, as his servant entered the room.

"Weel a day, sir; I'm na so lithe as I was, it must be ouned—but waes me! age comes to all—to rich and puir, to gude and bad—and nae ane can help it."

"Have you found out who occupies the next apartment?"

"Ye mauna be fashed, sir; it was an o'ersight in me not to hae jist asked the womankind wha makes the beds, wha sleepped in the room hard by ye, but the truth is, I jist forgot it till ye speered at me this

morn, and I find it is the bairns of a Curnel Fairfax; unco' noisy. I'll warrant me, but I hae tauld the chambermaid she must e'en put them far away from yer chamber, or else ye'll gae to anither yoursel."

"Then you're a fool for your pains, that's what you are," said Mr. Maclaurin, in a greater passion than Donald had seen him in for many years. "I *won't* have the children moved on any account. Why, I would not have them leave the next room for a thousand pounds."

"Hoot awa, sir! a thousand pounds is a great sum; but I suppose ye'll be for moving yersel into anither chamber."

"I tell you, I won't; *there* they, poor little things, shall stay, and *here* will I remain, as long as I can manage it; so go directly and tell the chambermaid that no change is to be made, and, hark you, find out who the person is who sings in the next room."

"Puir body! he's vara strange the day. I dinna ken what has come to him. Mayhap it's a lightning afore death. Auld Moggy Macpherson, wha had the gift of the second sight, often said that when auld men took strange fancies, it was an unco' bad sign, and not canny, and the puir body is nae sae young as he was fifty years ago. I should nae wonder if he was near his end. Let me see, he's aulder than I am by a matter of five years; puir body, I'll be sorry to see him gang to the grave, but it canna be helped, we maun all go there sooner or later. But when he's gone, I'll tak the legacy he told me he had put in his will for me, and I'll gang to bonny Scotland, and spend my auld days in comfort there."

All this muttered old Donald to himself, as he proceeded in quest of the chambermaid, to countermand the order he had lately given her, which countermand produced the reflection from her, that "She wished some people knew their own minds, and then they would give less trouble to other people."

"But wha sleeps in the ither room next my master's?" asked Donald.

"A Methodist preacher."

"Does he sing?" demanded Donald.

"Yes, I sometimes hear him singing hymns, and a disagreeable voice he has, too, chanting through his nose."

"Troth, then, the mischief's out at last; that's what the auld master meant when he tauld me to find out wha was the person that sang in the next room. Could you nae put the preacher in anither room?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do, for he's a stingy hound, and is not worth considering."

"What a time you have been away, Donald!" exclaimed Mr. Maclaurin, when his servant returned. "You really get so old and infirm, that you are not capable of performing your service. I must get a young and active man, for you wear out my patience."

"Age is honourable, I've aye heard say," replied Donald, "and I'm nae ashamed to show my grey hairs, and I maun say it's unco' unkind in ye to speak sae to yer puir old servitor, after all the years he has passed in trying to please ye," and Donald shook his grey locks, and took out his pocket-handkerchief, which he applied to his eyes.

"Have you found out who the person is that sings?" demanded Mr. Maclaurin, half melted by the reproach of his old servant.

"I ha'e, sir; 'tis e'en a Meethodist preecher wha sings the hymns, and the housemaid will put him awa to anither room."

"A Methodist preacher! You and the chambermaid are a couple of fools together. I tell you the voice I mean is a woman's voice, and the sweetest, too, that I have heard these fifty years, and her songs no more resemble the nasal twang of a Methodist preacher than I am like — what I was fifty years ago," said Mr. Maclaurin, heaving a deep sigh. "Find out who this woman is. I must hear her sing again, and as often as possible. Discover her position in life, and lose no time about it. But stay, I'll dress as quickly as I can, and when I'm at breakfast, you can make your inquiries."

"And sae 'tis the woman-kind that's running in his puir auld heed all this while!" thought Donald to himself. "Puir auld body, I begin tae think he's daft. Weel, it canna be helped, age weel come, and auld men weel get into their dotage. God preserve me frae gieing my thoughts to the women-kind when I get to be seventy, for it's an unco' fashious thing! but I have got a matter of five years before me before I get to be seventy, and five years is a long while; and I'll hae my legacy yet, and go to auld Reekie."

When Mr. Maclaurin had breakfasted, and he enjoyed his matinal repast much less than usual, so engrossed were his thoughts by the singer, he rang for his servant, and was half tempted to quarrel with him

for the time he took to answer the summons, as he entered the apartment, panting and out of breath, from ascending the steep stairs.

"Have you found out who the person is?" demanded he, before Donald had time to close the door.

"I ha'e, sir; she's an Irish lassie, and tends upon the bairns of Curnel Fairfax."

"Irish! I knew she must be. But is she a governess, or only a nursemaid, Donald?"

"She maun be a servant, I guess, sir, for she taks her meals wi' the ither servant folk, and I mind in the families I ever kenned, the governess took her meals wi' the maister and mistress of the house, or wi' the bairns she was teaching."

"Yes, she must be a servant. I am sorry for it, for I should like to have found her a grade above that. A governess would have been the thing; poor—that unhappy class are all so—poor, and with an education, I might have befriended her, and her music and accomplishments would have charmed my old age," murmured Mr. Maclaurin, but not in so low a tone as to escape the ears of his domestic.

"He's quite demented, puir gentleman," thought Donald, "for it's clear that he's fashed to ken that this lassie is a servant. Wae's me, his puir head is quite crazed. At seventy to be thinking o' lasses! Who e'er heard the like, and I, wha ha not mair than sixty-five, ne'er gie a thought to them! Ay, ay, he maun be demented quite, puir body!"

"Well, then, as she is a servant, there can be, I think, no chance of giving offence in offering her a present. Here, Donald, are five sovereigns," and

Mr. Maclaurin opened his purse and deliberately counted out the gold; "give these to the young woman, and tell her that they come from an old man who has been delighted with her singing, and who will be much gratified by hearing it again, whenever it is convenient to her."

"Five golden pieces! Weel, I maun say yer o'er leeberal o' yer gold. If I give her one o' them the lassie will be right glad; but five! — 'twad be a sin and a shame."

"I don't want your opinion on that point, Donald. Do as you're bid."

"Mr. Maclaurin, I've been your faithful servitor for thirty-sax years, three months, and sax days, and till the day ye never offered me sic an affront, and it's nae weel done o' ye; for, tho' I am but a servitor, I know my duty, and I am a reg'lar attendant at the kirk, and it's nae right o' ye to send me a corrupting a young lassie wi' yer siller."

Mr. Maclaurin opened his eyes to their utmost extent, and gazed on Donald with perfect astonishment.

"Why, what on earth can you have put into your head, you stupid old blockhead?" exclaimed he. "Me send you corrupting a young woman! Why, you must be perfectly crazed—stark, staring mad!"

"Nae quite, sir. But what can a body think when his maister asks him to find out all manner of parteeculars about a young lassie, and wants to send her enow siller to pay a year's wages?"

"It is only a suspicious old fool like you who could form such wicked surmises about his master," replied

Mr. Maclaurin, not a little ruffled by his servant's reflections, yet, such is the weakness of human nature, somewhat flattered, too, at being supposed still young enough to have the views imputed to him on the young woman in question. "So you refuse to take the money to this person?"

"Yes, sir, I'm fashed to be compelled to refuse to obey yer orders, but I munna gae again' my conscience and the princeeples of the kirk."

"You are enough to provoke a saint, that's what you are, you old blockhead! but I'll send you about your business, and get a young, active man to wait on me."

"Ye maun e'en do as ye weel, sir; and, in gude troth, if ye maun gang about corrupting young lassies wi yer siller, ye had better get a young man wha hae nae conscience, and attends nae kirk, than a man wi gray hairs like me."

"Leave the room, leave the room, I have no patience with you," exclaimed Mr. Maclaurin, really discomposed by the pertinacity of Donald in attributing improper motives for his generosity towards the songstress whose voice had charmed him, and for refusing to convey his gift to her.

When, some time after breakfast, Mr. Maclaurin retired to his bed-chamber — and truth compels us to declare that he went there in the hope of hearing his unseen syren sing again — he was delighted to find her warbling forth the following song, the music in which abundantly atoned for the want of poetry in the words, and for the rich Irish brogue in which they were pronounced:—

"Oh! ask me not to leave my home,
My own dear native land,
Away in foreign climes to roam,
A wand'rer on each strand.

I cannot leave the mountains high,
That rise to meet the sun;
Nor the green vales that 'neath them lie,
Through which clear streamlets run.

I cannot leave my father dear,
Nor quit my mother's side;
I cannot chase the starting tear,
Nor e'er become your bride.

Go seek some maid who prizes gold,
And give to her your hand;
But my true heart shall ne'er be sold—
I'll stay in mine own land."

Mr. Maclaurin scarcely allowed himself to breathe, so fearful was he of losing a single note of the song, and when it ceased he longed to hear it again. He folded five sovereigns, the identical five that Donald had refused to convey to the Irish maiden, in a paper, and wrote a few lines on the envelope, stating that "an old man, passionately fond of music, had derived so much pleasure from hearing the person in the next room sing, that he begged her acceptance of the sum enclosed, and joined to it a request that she would indulge him by singing in her chamber whenever he was in his, which he would make known by gently knocking on the partition." Having sealed this little parcel, the next difficulty was how it could it be delivered. Donald would not take it, and to ask the

waiter or housemaid to convey it would be to expose the young Irishwoman to their suspicions and animadversions. What was he to do? It occurred to him that the safest and simplest plan would be to watch until the songstress should be leaving her chamber, and then to meet her, and put the billet into her hand. He waited some time, but, finding that she did not leave her room, he took courage, approached her door, and having, with a trembling hand, tapped at it, was told, in a voice much less musical than he anticipated, to "Come in." He had expected that, on his knocking at the door, the person he so much desired to meet would come forward to open it, and so save him the necessity of entering the chamber, which he, being a very timid and staid man, wished to avoid, thinking it indecorous. But, when he knocked again, the words, "Botheration to ye, why can't ye come in when yer towld?" uttered in a loud and coarse tone, had such an effect on him that he was retreating quickly to his own room, when Molly Malowny, suspecting that some one was hoaxing her, ran into the passage, and, seeing Mr. Maclaurin retreating as rapidly as his infirm legs enabled him to do, she pursued him, and, shaking him roughly by the coat, exclaimed, "And arn't ye ashamed o' yerself, an ould man like ye, to be comin' knockin' at a dacent girl's door, and then runnin' away like a thief? What di ye mane by it?"

"Don't be angry—pray don't; I meant no harm—indeed I did not—but I wanted to give you this," and he offered her the letter.

"Who is it from, and what is it about? Spake

out; what are ye so shy and afeard for, if it isn't some mischief ye have in that ould head of yours?"

"Take the letter, I beg of you; that will explain all."

Ere Molly Malowny could answer, and while the letter was in her hand, Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax suddenly turned an angle in the passage, and were close to her. Both master and mistress looked the surprise they felt.

"What means this?" asked the colonel sternly.

"Indeed, sir, and that's what I want to know," replied Molly Malowny. "This ould gintleman, and more shame for him, comes to my door, when I was at work thinkin' o' nothing at all, and raps. 'Come in,' says I, little dhramin' who was there, but, instead of coming in, he raps again. 'Botheration to ye,' says I, 'whoever you are; why can't ye come in when yer tould?' But not a bit does any one come, so I puts down my work, and by the same token 'twas the child's chimey* my misthress gave me to make, and I runs to the door and opens it, and what should I see but this same ould man runnin' away as fast as a lamplighter; and so, as I saw he wanted to make a fool of me by knockin' and runnin' away, I jist made bould to folly him, and ax him what he maned by such doin's to a dacent girl like myself, and he says he only wanted to give me a letther, and puts this into my hand. That's the whole truth of the matter, I can make my affidavy, Curnel; so I hope ye won't

* Chemise.

be after layin' the blame of the ould man's bad behaviour on me."

"If this young woman's statement be correct, sir," said Colonel Fairfax, "you alone are blameable in this affair."

"Yes, sir, her statement is perfectly correct, and I should be sorry that any act of mine, however innocently meant, should entail any disagreeable consequences on her. Do me the favour, sir, of reading the few lines I addressed to her, and they will explain what now appears inexplicable, or worse."

"Do, Curnel, if ye plase, read the bit o' writin'," said Molly, "for as I don't know a letther in the alfy-bit, and can't tell a B from a bull's fut, I'd like to know what the ould man maned."

"I feel in so awkward and embarrassing a position that I must entreat your indulgence, madam," observed Mr. Maclaurin, turning to Mrs. Fairfax, and bowing. "Be assured I had not the least intention of offering any insult or improper advances towards this young woman — my age ought to be my best guarantee against the suspicion of any such intention; but a passion for music, and the gratification which this person's voice afforded me, have led to this embarrassing position, which I greatly regret. I hope, however, that you will permit the young woman to retain the gift offered to her without any evil motive."

Colonel Fairfax opened the letter, and submitted it to his wife, who, having read it, smiled, and told Molly Malowny she was at liberty to accept the offering intended for her. Molly took the five sovereigns,

dropped a curtsey to Mr. Maclaurin, and said, "I'm greatly beholden to ye, sir, and if it's my singin' plases ye, sure I'll sing for ye as often as ye like, purvided the Curnel and the misthris has no objection; and I ax yer pardon for shakin' ye so roughly, but what could a dacent girl do in such a case, and I thinking ye were wanting to make game of me?"

Colonel Fairfax and his wife motioned to their nurserymaid to retire, and Mr. Maclaurin, looking heartily ashamed of himself, and truly distressed, bowed to them both, and withdrew.

"Five goolden sovereigns!" said Molly Malowny, as she counted them over. "Well, sure I am a lucky girl; and to have got 'em for nothing at all at all, but jist for singing thim ould songs my granny taught me. and I never thinking that any one in the wide world was listening to me, except the childer! Yes, indeed, I'm a lucky girl, that's what I am. And, now I think of it, my dhrame is come true; sure didn't I dhrame that I saw a purse of goold in a dog's mouth, and I gave him a bone, and he let the goold fall into my lap. The ould man is the dog, and here, sure enough, is the goold. Faith, I'll sing to him from mornin' till night, if he'll give me such presents as this. Let me see—five and five makes tin, and five is fifteen, and five more would make twenty. If he was to give me three more fives, sure I'd be as rich as a Jew. My fortune would be made, and I might dhress finer than any of them ladies'-maids that turn up their noses at me bekase I'm not as well dhressed as they are. Sure I could buy a silk gown, and a bonnet with flowers in it, and a mantilly like

what I see the ladies'-maids wear, walking on the Steyne. What a quare ould gentleman, to knock at my door, and then run away like mad! I gave him a good shakin', though, poor ould man, for I thought he was wanting to play tricks on me. And then the fright I got when I saw the Curnel and my mistress close at my elbow, before I dhreamt they were near me, and they looking so black at me! Well, it's all over now, and they know I wasn't to blame; and I've got the five sovereigns, so it has been a lucky day for me."

CHAPTER XI.

Unloved, unhonoured, feeble, old,
Worn out in hoarding useless gold,
What now avails the glittering store,
When youth, and health, and peace are o'er?
It cannot lull disease or pain,
Or bring back other days again.
How vain is that for which through years
We've toil'd, a prey to doubts and fears!
How willingly would we bestow
The dross for which no use we know,
Could it but purchase us once more
The feelings that were ours of yore!

When Mr. Maclaurin again found himself in the solitude of his chamber, many gloomy reflections passed through his mind.

"What is the good of all the wealth I have for so many long and weary years laboured to amass?" thought he. "Has it brought me happiness, or can it afford me enjoyment? I have been so intent on accumulating it, that I forgot to cultivate friendship, or even to form acquaintances; I have outlived my kindred, and stand alone in the world, a solitary, unloved, old man; with

no one to lean on in descending the vale of years, no friendly hand to smooth my pillow, no kind companion to cheer my interminable evenings, or to enliven my dull hearth ; no one to whose happiness I can contribute, or who cares for mine. My wealth seems to me like a mockery, since it avails me not to secure any one of the mental enjoyments for which my heart yearns. As well might the dying miser, reduced to his desperate state by having denied himself all the comforts, nay, more, the common necessaries of life, find pleasure in the contemplation of the gold which he feels he must soon leave behind him, as for me to find consolation in my wealth under present circumstances. How utterly worthless it now appears, when a trifling portion of it would suffice to furnish the few wants left me ! I look with envy on all who have children to care for them in the dreariness of old age, or even friends to lighten by companionship its gloom.

" I dreamt not of all this when I was spending my youth and manhood in the cankering cares entailed by the unceasing toil of money-making. Only let me be rich ! was my constant thought, and, when I am so, then will it be time to retire from labour, to take mine ease, and to live surrounded by those comforts and luxuries which I now deny myself. During the first years of my toil, I fixed the period of my retirement from business at that when I should have amassed the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds. My desires were then moderate ; young blood circulated briskly in my veins, and health prompted the desire for many enjoyments which prudence denied. All pleasures were postponed until the twenty-five thousand should be my

own, and that epoch was impatiently yearned for. It came—slowly, to be sure, but it did come—and then, had I been wise, I might have retired from toil and care, and cultivated love and friendship. But the demon Habit had linked itself with the desire for wealth. I had grown accustomed to privations and solitude; and, when the promptings of avarice led me to continue to toil until I could add another twenty-five thousand to the one already acquired, I mistook it for the suggestion of prudence, and worked on until I became master of half a 'plum.' That gained, I wished to be the possessor of a whole one. I had grown used to the dreary routine of life, which at first had been so irksome to me; the sap of my existence had dried up, the blood circulated but feebly in my veins, the desire for enjoyment was gone, and I was only appalled by the solitude in which I found myself. My kindred had, one after another, left the earth: I had refused to minister to their wants, or to add to their comforts, until I had first obtained the sum I deemed necessary for the security of my own future support. That sum had been doubled, tripled, quadrupled, and now there was none left who had any claim on my affection to share it. The motive for toil was gone, but the habit of it continued to enslave me.

"Wealth begets wealth; I am now richer, far richer, than I ever expected to be; but what avails it? The solitary pleasure in which I have ever indulged has been music, and my frequent visits to the Opera my only extravagance. But, even then, though the dulcet sounds charmed me, they appealed not to my heart; they touched no chord that vibrated; they awakened

no association of the olden time. It was reserved for the notes of the young woman I encountered here to do that; and, ever since I heard her sing, my thoughts are continually recurring to the days of my youth, and my heart craves for a continuance of the sweet though sad emotions her voice called forth from their long and death-like slumber. Could I but secure that voice to soothe my solitude, to bring back the memory of other days, how gladly would I bestow a large portion of my useless wealth in the acquisition! This colonel and his wife, to whom the singing of the Irishwoman affords no pleasure, who are, perhaps, ignorant that she has a fine voice, possess that for which I would pay largely. Why should I not endeavour to obtain it? Yes, I will secure her independence, if she will give up her engagement in the family with whom she now lives, and enter mine. Her service shall be light. I will require nothing from her but to sing to me every evening to lull me to sleep, as she does the children she now tends. Am I not grown into second childhood, and do I not require her song to soothe me as much, ay, and more too, than the innocent creatures to whom the fatigue of the long day's joys and pastimes ensure unbroken repose?"

Such were the cogitations that filled the brain of Maclaurin, as hour after hour rolled away in the solitude of his chamber. Had he noted down his thoughts, they would probably have expressed what we, gentle reader, have done for him; and the result was, that he determined on appealing to Colonel Fairfax, and, after explaining the dreariness of his position, and the yearning he felt for the voice of his nurserymaid, entreat,

as the greatest favour that could be acceded him, that the said nurserymaid should be transferred to his service. But then came the reluctance, the shamefacedness, of laying bare to a man, and a soldier, too—a class which, *par parenthèse*, the shy citizen believed to be made of sterner materials than other men — the secret feelings so long pent up in his withered heart. He shrank from it as most men in a similar state would; for they all know that when sympathy or pity is required, it must not be sought from man. No, he would appeal to Mrs. Fairfax; a woman would understand, would commiserate, his situation, and he remembered and yielded assent to the truth of the lines :—

> "In woman's breast hath
> Pity made its home."

Yes, he would reveal to Mrs. Fairfax all that had passed in his mind relative to her nurserymaid, and, as he recalled the gentle expression of that lady's countenance, he felt assured she would put no harsh interpretation on his views or conduct. He seized a pen to write to her, but, as he opened his blotting-book, Molly Malowny commenced a song often heard in his youthful days, and every note of which was fondly remembered. How strange is the power of association! The very tone and pronunciation peculiar to the class of the singer, in general so far from agreeable to the ears of the natives of other countries, sounded most pleasantly to his, for the rich brogue reminded him of the accents heard in childhood—the happiest, indeed the only happy, days of his existence. Whether it was the joy occasioned by the gift of the

five guineas, a larger sum than she had ever previously possessed, or the desire of pleasing Mr. Maclaurin, whom she knew to be in the next room, which influenced the songstress, we cannot take upon ourselves to say, but never before had Molly Malowny sang so well as when her clear melodious voice poured out the following ditty:—

"O, Honour, honey, but love is bonny
A little while when it's just quite new;
But when it's old, love, it does grow cold, love,
And melts away like the morning dew.

In days gone by, love, when thou wert nigh, love,
My looks, my thoughts, all were turned to thee:
And when we parted, oh! broken-hearted,
I prayed that death soon would set me free.

And thou didst swear, love, that thou wouldst e'er, love,
Continue faithful and true to me;
That no persuasion should e'er occasion
Thy heart to change in its constancy.

At length returning, my bosom burning
With all the love of departed years,
I flew to meet thee, once more to greet thee
With words of fondness—with smiles and tears.

We met—oh! never, if I live for ever,
Shall I forget thy calm, careless glance,
The look of coldness that checked the boldness
Of my too warm and assured advance.

At first in anguish did I weep and languish,
And mourn thy falseness with bitter tears;
But soon from thee, love, I learn'd to see, love,
How vain are passion's sweet hopes and fears."

The old man became positively enraptured as he listened, and so greatly did her song excite him that he plucked up courage to request an interview with Mrs. Fairfax, instead of communicating with her on paper, a task which he somewhat dreaded, from being conscious that he was little skilled in the epistolary art. He rang the bell, and sent the waiter who answered his summons with a request to be permitted to wait upon Mrs. Fairfax. An assent being given, he quickly availed himself of it, and the mild countenance and gentle manner of that lady so much assured him that he soon conquered his habitual shyness and nervous hesitation, and made her acquainted with his feelings. The most eloquent description of his loneliness and isolation might have produced less effect than the plain and simple exposition of it made by him. Her feelings became interested for the old recluse, and as she compared *his* position with her own, blessed with a loving and beloved companion, and with children who gave her a new interest in life, she learned to pity still more deeply the being who, with all his wealth, had no one to cheer the dreariness of old age, or to watch with tenderness over its decline.

"Had I but your servant to sing to me, madam, I should be content; and if you would only resign her to me, you would for ever insure my gratitude," said Mr. Maclaurin.

"I pledged myself to her mother, from whose roof I received her, that I would not part from her while she conducted herself properly, and that, if I ever became dissatisfied with her, I would send her back to

her parents. To resign her to you merely that she might sing would be to expose her to the certainty of contracting habits of idleness, and this I could not reconcile it to my conscience to do."

"My housekeeper, an old and steady woman, would perhaps find employment for her—give her sewing, or something light for her to work at, madam."

"It is to be feared, sir, that a young woman aware that she was chosen for her voice would be but little disposed to follow the dictates of your housekeeper, and the introduction of Molly Malowny into your house would most likely lead to many disagreeable scenes with your old servants."

"Molly Malowny, did you say, madam? Where—from what part of Ireland does she come?"

"I engaged her, sir, at Kilkenny, near to which place her family reside."

"Yes, it is—it must be so. She must be the daughter of Molly Malowny—my first, my only love."

"She is the grand-daughter of a person of that name, sir," replied Mrs. Fairfax, "and inherits her fine voice, though not her good looks, for I have seen the old woman, who even still retains a considerable portion of the beauty for which she is said to have been once remarkable, though so far advanced in life."

"Ah, madam, it is no wonder the tones of the voice and the old songs produced such an effect on my feelings. I must not lose sight of this young woman; I would rather give up thousands—ay, tens of thousands, than not have her to sing to me; I would

rather—yes, by all that is good, I would do that which would make all who know me laugh, and call me an old fool in his dotage. I would mar—yes, marry her, rather than lose that voice which brings back the memory of the only happy days of my life to me."

Mrs. Fairfax started with surprise.

"I see you are startled, madam, at the thought of my marrying a servant. But, consider, I am alone in the world; known only on the Exchange as the rich old Maclaurin, whose threshold neither friend or acquaintance ever crosses. What care I who may laugh, provided I have one honest heart to be grateful to me, and that sweet voice to cheer me? Yes, madam, I see it is the only way to secure the blessing I crave. The entrance of Molly into my house in any other character than that of its mistress—as my wife—would be attended with many annoyances to her and to me from my old servants, who have grown self-willed, but my marriage with her will remove all difficulties. But, perhaps, *she* may object;" and the poor old man looked as alarmed as if he thought the poor nurserymaid, with the scanty wages of eight guineas a-year, would be likely to refuse the rich Mr. Maclaurin.

Mrs. Fairfax smiled, and said she did not think that Molly, who was a very prudent woman, would refuse so advantageous a marriage. "Nevertheless," resumed she, "would it not be as well for you to take some time for consideration, before you make her the offer? Would it not be right to consult some friend?"

"I have no friend, madam; and on this occasion I

am glad I have not, for a friend would be sure to advise me against what he would call an imprudent marriage, but which, I know, will give me one gleam of happiness before I die. I repeat to you, madam, I am alone in the world."

"Molly, though a virtuous and well-disposed young woman, is totally uneducated—she can neither read nor write."

"No matter, madam, no matter: I shall not require her to do either. I shall ask nothing at her hands except to sing to me; nothing else, positively nothing."

"Before I take any step, you must allow me to consult my husband."

Colonel Fairfax entered the room precisely at this moment, and his wife, with peculiar tact and delicacy, explained to him the purport of Mr. Maclaurin's visit.

"If the singing of our nurserymaid is the sole cause of your preference, allow me to observe, sir," said Colonel Fairfax, "that you might meet with many young persons, accomplished musicians, and well-educated, who, I doubt not, would be happy to become your wife, without your contracting a marriage which must be considered derogatory to a gentleman of your wealth."

"Perhaps I might, sir, perhaps I might. There are always, and so much the worse, plenty of poor young women, well born and brought up, who, for sake of bread, would marry an infirm old man like me, in preference to earning a precarious subsistence as governesses to tiresome children, or companions to

ill-tempered old women. But their singing, however fine and scientific it might be, could not produce the same effect on my feelings—could not transport me back to the days of my youth, and bring before me scenes vanished long years ago from my mind."

Colonel Fairfax suggested, as his wife had previously done, the prudence of Mr. Maclaurin's consulting some friend, and of not deciding on so grave a step as matrimony, before he had taken due time for reflection; but the old man was firm, and declared that, if Molly Malowny would accept his hand, nothing should prevent his marrying her.

"If you, madam, who have been so kind and indulgent in listening to my statement, will condescend to question this young woman, leaving to her free and unbiassed choice whether she will become my wife or not, you will add to the obligations I already owe you; and if you will question her in my presence, that I may judge whether she feels any repugnance to accept my offer, I shall be still more obliged."

The bell was rung, Molly Malowny was summoned, and in a few minutes after she made her appearance. But who shall paint her joy and surprise when her mistress explained to her the intentions of Mr. Maclaurin in her favour!

"And is it in earnest the good ould gentleman is, ma'am?" asked Molly.

"Quite so," replied Mr. Maclaurin.

"Why, then, if that's the case, faith here's my hand, and welcome. God bless you for a nice kind ould gentleman, and long may ye live to reign over us! I'm ready and willing—and proud, too, into the bar-

gain—to become yer honour's lawful wife. Sure it's a great favour and honour, and one I never could expect, and never will forget; but I hope you won't take me away from the Curnel's childer until my misthris—and a good kind one she has been to me—has purvided herself with another nurserymaid in my place."

This trait of simplicity and gratitude pleased Mr. Maclaurin, who entreated that Mrs. Fairfax would be so obliging as to order for Molly a wardrobe suitable to the position she was going to fill, and, with the Colonel's consent, condescend to be present at the nuptials.

The requests were graciously complied with, and Molly, half wild with joy, seized the old man's hand and kissed it, saying, "Long may ye live, ye jewel of an ould gentleman! Sure 'twas a happy day for me when my songs pleased ye, and that I first set me eyes on the ould face of ye! Won't there be rejoicing at Ballamacrash, when they hear the news that Molly Malowny is going to be married to a gentleman—a *raal* gentleman, that sits down in the presence of the Curnel and the misthris, and who keeps a body sarvant? They'll never believe it, that they won't, unless they see it under the Curnel's own hand. Oh! cushla ma chree! what a pity it is I can't write to them and tell them my luck!"

"You mentioned Ballamacrash, I think; do you come from there?"

"Arragh, don't I! Faith, and I do, and all my people before me. Sure I never left it 'till I came to the Curnel's family, and a lucky day that same was.

Oh! when my granny hears of it, she'll be for jumping out of her skin with joy. 'Go to England, Molly,' says she, 'though, troth, I'm loth to part from ye; but, if the Curnel and his lady will take ye, go, for England is a great place, and many a one that goes there makes a fortune. Was not there Mr. Patrick Maclaurin—the Lord forgive him for all the grief he has caused me!'"—Mr. Maclaurin started—"'went there when he was a gorsoon, and people say he made heaps of goold; and there are many others also who made their fortune in that big city, London.' When oncest poor granny began to spake of Mr. Patrick Maclaurin, it wasn't asy to stop her, for the ould love had left a nest-egg in the poor heart of her, which, though never hatched, was still presarved." Mr. Maclaurin shook his head slowly, and sighed. "Granny thought as much of Mr. Patrick as if he was the Lord Leftenant —yes, faith, and more—as if he was Mr. O'Connell himself. Sure, as she often tould me, she refused to marry an honest boy, thinking all along that Mr. Patrick would come back and marry her when he had made a fortune; not, as she owned, that ever he had said he would; but, when a man says he loves a girl, sure what else can she expect, even though he comes of genteeler people than her? But, after she waited twelve years without even so much as hearing from him, she was persuaded to marry my grandfather, who knew that, though she had loved Mr. Patrick, she never forgot that unless he married her she could be nothing to him. And, while my grandfather lived — and he didn't die till he was an ould man—she never mentioned the name of Mr. Patrick; but afterwards, and especially since

she has grown so ould, she likes to be talking of the time when she was a girl, and Mr. Patrick loved her, which is strange enough, for she can't remember things that happened much later."

The prolix reminiscences of Molly were patiently listened to by Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax, but most attentively and with deep interest by Mr. Maclaurin.

"Yes," said he, "your grandmother was a good and a virtuous woman."

"And did ye know her, sir?" asked Molly.

"I knew her well, for I am the Patrick Maclaurin of whom you heard her speak."

"And is it possible? Well, who'd have thought it! And is it yerself that is the ould sweetheart my granny used to be croonin * after? But sure you must be greatly althered, for she used to say ye were as fine and purty a boy as could be seen in all Ireland. But ould age spoils every one."

Molly felt, as soon as she had uttered this thoughtless truth, that she had done wrong, and immediately tried to rectify it by adding:—

"But sure we'll all grow ould; and, though ye're not so young as ye were fifty years ago, ye're still a mighty comely ould gentleman, troth and ye are, though I say it that oughtn't to say it, bekase I'll soon be yer wife."

It was evident that Mr. Maclaurin was infinitely less pleased with his bride elect's conversational powers than with her vocal ones, which he evinced by betraying several symptoms of dissatisfaction during her

* Lamenting over the memory of.

reminiscences of her grandmother. Though far from refined, he was nevertheless struck by the extreme coarseness of Molly's tone and manner, and it was only the recollection of her charming voice that reconciled him to the step he had already taken, and the irrevocable one he had arranged to take.

"Would it not be best, sir, that your marriage should be solemnized in London?" observed Mrs. Fairfax.

"Perhaps so, perhaps so; yet"—and he hesitated—"I should rather not return home to Finsbury Square until after my marriage. My housekeeper, Mrs. Macgillacuddy, is rather a termagant," and here the old man looked alarmed. "Old servants, you know, madam, think themselves privileged, and I would rather avoid her reflections previous to the event. Once it has occurred, she will feel that it is useless to give them utterance, and will either continue to discharge her duty quietly, or leave my service."

"Ah, then, is it afeard of yer ould housekeeper ye are?" interrupted Molly. "Never mind her, ayllaun,* let me alone for takin' yer part. I'll soon take the pride out of her if she begins to be saucy, I can tell her," and Molly's countenance lighted up with anger.

"No, no, you must let her alone. I would not have any quarrels in my house on any account; and Mrs. Macgillacuddy and Donald are great friends, and would combine directly, and disturb my comfort, if either of them were provoked."

"Lord love ye for a good ould soul! Little I'd

* My dear.

mind either of them, or both put together, if my blood was up; and only let me hear them offend ye, and if I don't give them tit for tat, and butter for fish, my name isn't Molly Malowny! I'll stand to ye, ye ould duck of a man, that I will; so fear no one."

Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax found it difficult to control their risible faculties, while Molly was promising to afford support and protection to her future spouse, who seemed to entertain almost as great a dread of her as of Mrs. Macgillacuddy.

"You could go to an hotel in London and remain there until after the marriage is performed," said Mrs. Fairfax, pitying the nervous old man's embarrassment.

"But then, madam, I could not have the satisfaction of your and the Colonel's presence, to which I attach great importance."

"I shall have business in London in a few days," observed Colonel Fairfax, "and it will put me to very little inconvenience to remain there until after the ceremony takes place."

"A thousand thanks, sir! a thousand thanks! I shall never forget your and this lady's kindness," and he bowed lowly to Mrs. Fairfax.

"If I might suggest a plan," said the Colonel.

"Certainly, sir, certainly."

"It would be, that we immediately provide ourselves with a successor to Molly, and consign her to the care of an humble but respectable friend of ours in London—an excellent woman, who was many years the companion of Mrs. Fairfax's mother, and who will, at our request, not hesitate to receive her. This

plan will preclude any observations being made on the station of your future wife, who, marrying out of the house of a lady in whose establishment she has filled no menial capacity, will enter yours in a manner more befitting your position in life."

"An excellent plan, sir, a most excellent plan, and I am deeply indebted to you for the suggestion."

"We will leave Brighton to-morrow, take Molly with us, place her with Mrs. Middleton, the lady mentioned, and you can follow as soon as you please."

Mr. Maclaurin took his leave, but, when quitting the room, Molly approached him, and dropping a low curtsey, said, "I'm greatly obliged to ye, sir; and when we're married I'll do my best to please ye, and make ye happy, for sure it's a proud and a great day for the likes o' me to be chosen by a nice ould gentleman like ye to be his lawful wife."

Mr. Maclaurin nodded to her good-naturedly, and desired, with much more the air of a master than of a suitor, that she would not expose herself to cold lest her voice should be injured, letting it be plainly seen that he only preferred her for this attraction.

Mrs. Fairfax was no sooner left alone than she commenced giving Molly good advice on her future conduct, but, although it was respectfully received, it was evident that the ignorant girl was too much elated with her good luck, as she styled it, to profit as much as she ought by such counsel.

"Oh! then, ma'am, only think what a surprise 'twill be at Ballamacrash when they hear that I am married to a gentleman who keeps a body sarvant, and has a great fortune! I wonder what will Nancy O'Shea

and Biddy Hoolaghan say to it? They that used to be jibing me, bekase I wasn't as purty as they are. How jealous they'll be, to be sure! And the boys that used to look down on me, too—Paddy Murphy, Tim Callaghan, and Rody Maguire, that wouldn't dance with me at the Patherns, bekase they said I was ugly. I'd like to know how they'll look when they see me dhressed for all the world like a raal lady, with an elegant veil over my face, and a pocket handkercher trimmed with lace in one hand, and a fine smelling-bottle in the other, like the grand lady I saw in a carriage the other day."

"Think not of such trifles," said Mrs. Fairfax. "Think only of showing your gratitude to Mr. Maclaurin."

"Troth, ma'am, I'll do my best to show it; but it's only natural that I should think of the surprise and envy of all them that used to be crowing over me, when they come to know that I'm almost equal to a raal lady! And, ma'am, as the ould gentleman said I might have new clothes, I'd be so thankful if you'd let me buy a gown I saw in a shop-window yesterday. It's a most elegant dhress, quite fit for a lady—a yellow ground, with scarlet sthripes, and green sprigs between 'em."

Mrs. Fairfax could not forbear smiling at Molly's taste, but told her that, as they were to proceed to London next day, it would be useless to make any purchases at Brighton.

"Do not mention it to any one here," said Mrs. Fairfax, "that you are going to be married."

"Mayn't I tell it to the lady's-maid in the next

room to me, who looks so haughty whenever she meets me, just for all the world as if I was not fit to be spoken to?"

"No, you must not name it."

"Oh! what a pity, for she would be so vexed! But I hope, ma'am, you'll let me tell it to the chamber-maid, for she is a mighty dacent civil girl."

"No, Molly, I must interdict your naming it to any one."

"Well then, ma'am, I won't tell it, but it's very hard to keep a secret that, if known, would vex so many. Troth, it's mighty hard," and Molly sighed deeply.

If, while reflecting on his engagement, any doubts of its wisdom crossed the mind of Mr. Maclaurin during the remainder of the day, they vanished when he retired to his bed-chamber, and heard Molly pour forth one of her Irish songs. Her voice, somewhat tremulous from joy, sounded more sweetly than ever in his ears; and he forgot the plain face, uncouth figure, strong brogue, and vulgar manners of his syren, in the delight her singing afforded him. And this rich and dulcet voice was henceforth to be at his command—was to soothe him to repose, and to awaken him from slumber! Yes, he was glad that he had decided on possessing it at any price; and with this feeling of satisfaction he resigned himself to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

"Oh, weak old man! and wilt thou take for wife,
To have and hold through all the years of life,
A creature rude, unfashioned, in whose mind
A sympathy with thine thou ne'er can'st find?
'Tis folly, madness, thus, in thine old age,
In such unsuited wedlock to engage.
Pause, and bethink thee ere it be too late,
And thou may'st still escape a wretched fate."

Two days after the departure of Colonel Fairfax and his family from Brighton, Mr. Maclaurin also left it, and, contrary to his former intention, returned to his own house, instead of going to an hotel. Having come back a week sooner than he was expected, his housekeeper was at little pains to conceal the displeasure she felt at this unusual proceeding of his.

"Gude troth, sir," said she in her shrillest tone, "I think ye might have just sent a wee line or two to say ye were a coming hame, and not tak a body by surpreese, when aw things are at saxes and sevens. Ye maun blame yersel, and na' ither folk, for finding naethin in it's place; its nae my fault, and it's unco'

hard that a puir body is to be fashed because ye dinna ken yer ain mind."

"Hold your tongue, and don't plague me," replied Mr. Maclaurin, with a courage he had not for many years displayed, for, angry at finding his house in a state of discomfort, he was by no means disposed to submit to the ill-humour of Mrs. Macgillacuddy.

"Haud my tongue! And is it e'en come to this? I did na' expect that, after thirty-sax years o' hard service, and in my auld age, I was to be tauld to haud my tongue by a maister I have served wi mickle zeal and honesty; but there's nae gratitude now-a-days, and faithful servitors meet but an unco' bad return from those they hae toiled, and moiled, and worked late and early for."

Mr. Maclaurin walked away from the angry housekeeper, muttering something only half intelligible about his determination to be master of his own house.

"And a puir hand ye'll make o' being maister in yer ain hoose," said Mrs. Macgillacuddy; "much ye ken aboot managing, puir auld body! But I'll gang to Donald, and hear what's the meaning of aw this ill-humour? There maun be something mair than's common in the wind that the auld man taks on for my telling him a wee bit o' my mind, when he neever during thirty-sax years was fashed at it before."

Donald told his old friend and fellow-servant all he knew—nay, more, all he suspected. She turned up her eyes, and raised her hands in utter astonishment at the narration. "And sae ye're to be turned awa, because ye'll nae earn the wages o' sin, and help

the auld demented body to corrupt the lassie wi' his goold. I ne'er heard the like. Wae's me to hae seen the day! But, if ye gang awa, Donald, it shall never be said that Moggy Macgillacuddy let ye depart alane. I'll e'en gang wi' ye to Scotland, and we maun get the blessing o' the kirk, and wi' the savings I hae in the funds, and I've a matter of twa thousand pounds, joined to yer ain savings, we may be comfortable in our auld age, and leave this wicked auld body to suffer for his ingratitude."

"But the leegacies, Moggy, the leegacies! If we gang awa, he'll nae leave us a bawbee. I ken him weel, and our thirty-sax years o' hard labour will have gone for naething."

"It's vara true, Donald, vara true. It's hard to lose the reward o' sae mony years' toil and trouble; and especially after we hae been maister and meestress here so long; he never meddling nor interfering in the management, never looking at the beels, nor finding faut wi' what we deed. We were the maisters in aw, except finding the siller; and we had, I maun say, a vast deal o' pickings and savings, one way or anither. We're unco' young, too, to leave off service, and gie up the hope of the leegacies. The auld body canna last long. Why, he's a matter o' seven years aulder than I am, and three aulder than yoursel, Donald."

"Ye're in error, Moggy, that's what ye are. The auld maister has five years mair than me; and, as to yersel, I dinna believe ye hae a day less than my ain age, sae dinna be setting up to be sae young, for it's unco' reediculous."

"Hoot awa, mon! dinna be trying to pass yersel off as being my age. I'd hae ye to ken that I'm mickle younger. Ye could munch yer oat cake and cook your parritch before I ever opened my een in this world o' care, and, if I thought o' marrying ye, it was because folk say a man should be mony years aulder than his wife; tho' I don't know why, for we women folk wear much better than the men, wha, puir bodies, look auld and worn out, while we are fresh and youthful-looking. But I suppose it makes them unco' ceeviler to see us sae comely; and ye ken, for wha does not, that yer sect is maun deesposed to be teeranical."

Here the sound of the bell of Mr. Maclaurin interrupted the angry rejoinder Donald was about to utter, a rejoinder that would probably have broken off for ever the matrimonial projects so long entertained by both, and the execution of which was only postponed until the death of their master should leave them at liberty to unite their fortunes and return to Scotland; so the housekeeper was left solus to reflect on the juvenile pretensions of Donald, and to smile with contempt at his doubts of the correctness of her statement relative to her own age.

"Donald," said Mr. Maclaurin, "I sent for you to say that it is not my intention to retain you or Mrs. Macgillacuddy any longer in my service; but, as you have both served me faithfully for many years, I mean to reward you with a gift of five hundred pounds each, the sum I had intended to bequeath you in my will. A person to take your place, and a housekeeper to fill hers, will be here in a week. You will both

deliver up to your successors all that you have in your charge, and, that done, I will fulfil the promise I have now made you."

"Ye maun just do as you please, sir. I'm fashed, sairly fashed, ta leave ye, and sae will Mrs. Macgillacuddy be also, but if 'tis yer pleesure that we should gang from yer hoose, why we maun e'en do as ye wish, but it's a sair trial to us baith." And Donald took out his handkerchief and held it to his eyes, believing that this display of his sensibility and attachment could not fail to melt his old master to pity, and perhaps induce him to revoke the sentence of dismissal.

Mr. Maclaurin had, however, determined on getting rid of his two servants, being well aware that his marriage would draw on him, not only their animadversions, but the expression of their sentiments, which for many years they had most unceremoniously been wont to utter. He felt that his wife ought to find at his house servants wholly unacquainted with her former condition, and prepared to treat her with respect; and from neither Donald, who knew her in her menial capacity, nor Mrs. Macgillacuddy, to whom he would be sure to communicate his knowledge of her original position, could the future Mrs. Maclaurin hope for the deference due from domestics to their mistress. Through the aid of Colonel Fairfax and his kind-hearted wife, suitable servants were to be engaged for the new *ménage*, and this arrangement being concluded, Mr. Maclaurin felt a little more at his ease. He was astonished to find how polite and respectful his old servant Donald and the housekeeper had grown

ever since he had given them notice to quit, and he was not a little pleased and proud of his own courage in thus vanquishing two persons, who, truth to say, had for thirty-six years made him feel that they were more masters of his house than he was. They were perfectly astounded at his determination, and longed, especially Mrs. Macgillacuddy, to give utterance to the bitter sarcasms which occurred to her on the occasion. But prudence and self-interest, the best checks to bad temper, or, at least, to the exhibition of it towards those who can punish it by withholding pecuniary assistance, operated so promptly on the mind of the irascible old housekeeper, that not the least symptom of her anger was revealed, and civil speeches and smooth looks met her master whenever she crossed his path.

The *trousseau* of *Miss Malowny*, as Molly was now styled, was commanded by Mrs. Fairfax, and Mr. Maclaurin paid a daily visit to his bride elect, who sang for him the whole *répertoire* of her Irish ballads to his infinite satisfaction. Her hostess had, at the request of Mrs. Fairfax, undertaken to instruct her in the first rudiments of politeness, and the common usages of society. She, above all things, recommended the adoption of a reserved and subdued manner, and an avoidance of loquacity, as the best means of not exposing Miss Malowny's want of education and ignorance of the rules of good breeding. Molly exhibited a praiseworthy docility in attending to the counsel of the worthy Mrs. Middleton, though she would sometimes ask that lady whether Mr. Maclaurin might not take it ill if she did not make herself agreeable.

"Sure, ma'am, it isn't mannerly for the woman of a house to sit like a mum-chance, as they say in Ireland, instead of talkin' an' laughin', an' jokin' and makin' every wan around her welcome and merry."

The mildness and good sense of Mrs. Middleton soon won the confidence and regard of the unsophisticated Irishwoman, and Mr. Maclaurin observed with pleasure that his future wife became more civilized under her tuition. Mrs. Fairfax, too, took a lively interest in her *ci-devant* nurserymaid, instructed her how to dress, and, by example, not less than by precept, effected a great reformation in the appearance and manner of Miss Malowny.

"Oh! then, ma'am, it's yourself that's the jewel of a woman—of a lady, I meant to say—and sure ye're a rale one, and no mistake, to be taching the likes o' me to behave genteelly. If I could but rade and write, the rest would come aisy to me, and I'd study hard to learn how to spake proper, and be able to read a prayer-book, for sure 'twould look quite as if I was a born lady to see me reading my prayers."

"Mrs. Middleton will, I am sure, have no objection to instruct you," replied Mrs. Fairfax; and that day Molly was provided with a copy-book and copper-plate to commence her lessons. The alphabet was soon mastered, but the spelling somewhat tried the patience of both mistress and pupil. But what will not perseverance achieve? and Molly's was truly indefatigable. Mrs. Fairfax often found it difficult to restrain her inclination to laugh when she found Miss Malowny, book in hand, with a triumphant air spelling "ab, eb, ib, ob, ub," and then Molly would say—"Oh! then,

ma'am, isn't it myself that's coming on finely with my lessons! just ax Mrs. Middleton whether I am not an attentive scholard."

At length the day fixed on for the celebration of the nuptial ceremony arrived, and Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax and Mrs. Middleton were present at it. Molly conducted herself with great propriety until the clergyman asked whether she would take Patrick Maclaurin to be her husband, &c., when she answered, "Faith, that I will, please your reverence, for what else brought me here but to marry him?"—a reply that made all present, not even excepting the clergyman himself, smile: but a keen observer must have noticed that Mr. Maclaurin's cheeks grew red with shame. The *happy* couple, as every newly-married pair is called in newspaper phrase, went to pass the honeymoon at Southend, and the bride beguiled the time spent on the road so agreeably by her singing that the bridegroom was in the happiest frame of mind imaginable, and congratulated himself on having secured for life one whose notes charmed him more than all the bank-notes he had for so many years toiled to acquire. So great was his satisfaction that, on his return home, he invested in the funds a thousand pounds for each of Colonel Fairfax's two children, and presented a silver soup tureen and four silver covered dishes to the Colonel, with a handsome necklace, pair of earrings, and bracelets, to Mrs. Fairfax, as marks of his sense of their kindness to his wife. Nor was Mrs. Middleton forgotten. Mr. Maclaurin put a five hundred pound note into her hand the morning of his marriage, and pressed her, as a

favour, to become a guest at his house as frequently as her convenience would admit.

Behold Mrs. Maclaurin now established in Finsbury Square, surrounded by every comfort, for her husband's heart opened by the magical key, music, that humanizer of stubborn ones, he was now disposed to be as generous as he had hitherto been sordid. Money was forwarded to his wife's family in Ireland, to render their position there more respectable, and nothing was wanting to Molly's happiness but the power of writing a full account of her grandeur, as she styled it, to her former friends and companions, for the express purpose, as she confessed, of exciting their envy and jealousy at her good fortune. The wish of confounding her late fellow-servants by exhibiting her finery often occurred to her; but the prudent advice of Mrs. Middleton, who became a frequent guest at Finsbury Square, precluded the indulgence of this vulgar desire. Three hours a-day, while her husband was at his counting-house, were devoted by Mrs. Maclaurin to the acquisition of reading and writing under the tuition of Mrs. Middleton, and the evenings were given to music, the old husband growing every hour more partial to the songs of his young and simple wife, and more indulgent to her. Great was her joy, when at length she could peruse a child's story-book, and was able to write her name. Mrs. Middleton had some difficulty to make her understand that she was to write Mary instead of Molly Maclaurin; but, when it was explained to her that Mary was the genteel mode, she adopted it, nay, requested Mr. Maclaurin to call her thenceforth by that name. The servants engaged for

the Finsbury Square establishment were not slow in detecting that their mistress was not, as they said, "much of a lady," or long accustomed to the comforts and elegances of life which she now enjoyed. Her exultation in their possession, and her ostentation in displaying them, convinced the four domestics that the old man had made a low match, and, with this conviction, they were well disposed to take liberties with their new mistress, which they dared not contemplate indulging in had they not felt assured of her ignorance and vulgarity. But soon did they find themselves checked in their first advances towards impertinence by the intrepid Mrs. Maclaurin, who quickly discovered the slights aimed at her, and as quickly resented them with a degree of warmth and determination that precluded any future attempts of the same kind, although the aggressors remained still more convinced of the low origin of their mistress by the very anger their conduct had excited in her breast. "A real lady," said one of them, talking over the affair, "would never have seen what we were driving at; but, if we intend to keep our places, and, as times go, it is the wisest thing we can do, it will be necessary for us not to let her see that we know she is no more a gentlewoman than ourselves."

"Marry come up, indeed," said the housemaid, who also enacted the *rôle* of *femme de chambre* to her mistress, "I'd be very sorry to be no genteeler than her! Why, if she was a lady, would she ask me every time she puts on a new dress, or cap, or bonnet, whether I ever saw such elegant ones before, and whether she isn't a lucky woman to have such a power of fine things?

It's my opinion that she was a ballad-singer in the streets, and that the old man took a fancy to and married her for her singing."

"I'm sure you are right," said the cook. "I thought I remembered her face; and, now I think of it, I'm sure I saw her singing before our door in my last place."

The judicious advice of Mrs. Middleton preserved Mrs. Maclaurin from the commission of many follies, and so far weighed with her as to induce her to observe the utmost respect and attention towards her husband. Nevertheless, the natural disposition and froward temper of the lady remained unchanged, and it required no little exertion of self-control to prevent the ebullition of the latter from interrupting the peace of her aged partner. Mrs. Middleton had expected that, when Mrs. Maclaurin was enabled to read fluently, she would take a pleasure in the perusal of good books, and therefore selected for her a choice number of volumes. The worthy woman was, however, disappointed in this expectation, for, after having looked over a few pages of each, her pupil declared that, instead of affording her any amusement, they quite "bothered" her, and that the newspaper was the only thing she liked to read, for she there found an account of lords, and ladies, and fine parties.

"I thought," observed Mrs. Middleton, "from your impatience to learn to read, that you wished to study."

"Not I, faith," replied Mrs. Maclaurin; "I only wanted to be able to read my prayer-book in church, without the danger of being laughed at for turning it upside down, as I was when at Mrs. Fairfax's by her

maid, when, not wishing to let that consaited creature see that I couldn't read, I pertended to do so; and I learned to write only to be able to let all my old friends in Ireland know how much better off I am than they ever will be."

This *naïve* confession of her pupil's incitement to learn astonished and disgusted Mrs. Middleton, and she endeavoured to make her comprehend the amusement as well as advantages to be derived from the study of history and *belles lettres*.

"What will history teach me except a pack of old stories about people dead and gone, that I don't care about, half of which mayn't be true, and, if true, that I wouldn't give a pin to know; but, as for Bell's letters, if they are anything like Bell's Life in London, which I saw the other day in the servants' pantry, I wouldn't object to read it now and then, for it seemed mighty entertaining."

Mrs. Middleton found all her efforts to correct the native vulgarity and coarseness of Mrs. Maclaurin unavailing. She was incorrigible; so her kind instructress was compelled to be satisfied with the progress her limited capacity allowed her to make in acquiring a less vulgar mode of expressing her sentiments, though she could not elevate them, and in gradually assuming a more refined tone and bearing than could have been expected in one so exceedingly coarse and illiterate as Mrs. Maclaurin had originally been. She observed with great surprise how little interest Mr. Maclaurin evinced in the mental improvement of his wife, and in this point the extreme selfishness of the old man was very apparent. Pro-

vided that she was ready to sing him to sleep in his easy chair every evening, he was content, and required no other exercise of her conjugal duty or affection: but if a cold, or any other indisposition, impaired her voice, he betrayed his annoyance with little regard to the suffering which she might have to endure, seeming to consider her as a musical instrument, on which so much of his happiness depended that it must not be out of tune. Luckily for his comfort, Mrs. Maclaurin's was a very robust constitution, so that her voice was rarely affected by the changes in temperature which influence so much the voices of others, and he was seldom deprived of his evening's solace, and consequently did not regret the extraordinary marriage he had made. His wife, however, was less satisfied; she wished for a larger theatre to exhibit her fine clothes and riches; the admiration of her servants did not suffice to satisfy her growing vanity; but her husband pertinaciously adhered to his long-established habit of seclusion, and permitted no visiters, except Mrs. Middleton and one or two of his old clerks, who were occasionally invited to partake the Sunday's dinner.

"I would not mind being shut up in this manner," would Mrs. Maclaurin say to Mrs. Middleton, "if I had not such elegant clothes to wear. But what's the good of being finely dressed, when there's no one but you, the ould clerks, and the servants to see me?"

But, though discontented, she had the prudence to conceal every symptom of the feeling from her *caro sposo*, who, three years after their nuptials, was snatched from this life by an apoplectic fit, while

listening to one of his favourite songs, after having partaken somewhat too largely of turtle soup that day at dinner. On opening his will, made but a few months previously, it was found that the whole of his vast wealth, with the exception of a legacy of five thousand pounds to Colonel Fairfax, half that sum to Mrs. Middleton, and a thousand to each of his clerks, was bequeathed to his widow. In the joy occasioned by the acquisition of this wealth, all regret for the donor was forgotten; and Mrs. Middleton, for the first time, began to be aware that her *ci-devant* pupil was neither so kind-hearted nor grateful as she ought to be. Her opinion, however, had now little weight with the rich widow, who, much sooner than decency permitted, commenced asserting her independence of all advice, and her aversion to those who were prone to offer it.

No sooner were the mortal remains of her husband consigned to the grave than Mrs. Maclaurin declared her intention of proceeding to Brighton, and commanded a splendid chariot to be built for her, and every other adjunct suitable to a lady of large fortune to be prepared. She refused to adopt the ordinary dress worn by widows, saying, it looked mean and poor, and attired herself in the richest velvets and satins, trimmed with an abundance of black lace, adhering only to the colour for mourning, but rejecting the customary materials. At Brighton, her ostentation and singularity of manners and costume attracted all eyes. Her wealth was magnified tenfold by public rumour, and her low origin gave rise to a hundred tales, each, if possible, more absurd than

the other. By one report she was said to have been a gipsy, whom the old merchant in his dotage had met on a common in Hampshire. By another she was asserted to have been a ballad-singer, whom he encountered in the streets — in short, there was no end to the stories invented and circulated about her. She was followed, stared and laughed at; and this notoriety, instead of displeasing or embarrassing her, gratified her vanity, and encouraged her to commit still greater follies. She had a levee of milliners and dressmakers every morning at her hotel, and exhibited all the airs and insolence peculiar to a *parvenue* without education or good taste. But, though people ridiculed the vulgar widow and her absurd finery, among the scoffers persons were not wanting who were disposed to offer homage to the rich Mrs. Maclaurin. Wealth, in all countries duly appreciated, is nowhere paid such court to as in England; and the possessor, whatever may be his or her defects, is sure to receive a courtesy which persons of the highest merit without fortune have little chance of meeting. Even those who laughed at the illiterate language and coarse manners of Mrs. Maclaurin refused not to associate with her; such is the power which wealth exercises over the generality of people. One lady excused herself to her acquaintances for visiting the rich widow, on the plea that she had a relation, an excellent young man, without fortune, for whom she would be an admirable wife; another had a brother, or nephew; and even those who had no wife-seeking male connexion to offer as an apology for making the acquaintance of Mrs. Maclaurin urged a numerous

family of daughters, ill-provided for, to one of whom so rich and lonely a woman might be very likely to take a fancy, and portion off. There was not a ruined spendthrift bachelor or gay adventurer at Brighton who did not build hopes and form schemes on the rich widow, and flock around her, intent to please.

Though elated beyond measure at a success that far exceeded her most sanguine expectations, Mrs. Maclaurin was by no means disposed to barter her independence for a husband, unless one presented himself with an aristocratic title. A real lady, as she termed it, she was determined to be, in order that she might have a coronet on her carriage, a distinction which, now that she had achieved a large fortune, appeared to her to be the most enviable possible. Yes, she would wed only a lord, and she smiled in contempt at the vain efforts to conciliate her favour made by the mercenary suitors who flocked around her.

The notoriety attached to her at Brighton followed her to London, where, taking up her abode in a fashionable hotel, she engaged a double box at the Opera, sported two or three carriages conspicuous for gaudiness and bad taste, and exhibited herself in costumes so remarkable for extravagance that she attracted all eyes wherever she appeared. A French *femme de chambre* was now added to her establishment, and a *dame de compagnie* engaged to appear with her in public, and to amuse her leisure hours. A lapdog, that indispensable appendage for women who have no mental resources, and who are compelled to bestow their tediousness on some victim or other,

was purchased; and a collar enriched with diamonds, from which was suspended a heart set with the same costly stones, adorned this canine favourite. Mrs. Maclaurin exhibited herself in the streets and parks every day in her gaudy equipage, her *dame de compagnie* seated opposite to her with the dog on her lap, attracting the gaze of the crowd who mocked her, while she believed herself the object of general admiration, "the cynosure of curious eyes."

After having exhibited herself for two or three years in the metropolis, and in various watering-places, without having achieved any lordly conquest, she determined on seeking another theatre on which to enact the *rôle* of a rich widow in search of a title, and decided on going to Rome to pass the winter. Having dismissed the seventh *dame de compagnie*, who had within three years filled that office in her establishment, Mrs. Bernard was recommended to her as a successor, and set out with her for Italy. Long before half the route was completed, this luckless woman discovered with dismay that her new situation was quite as insupportable as any of her former ones. To an ignorance which rendered her incapable of appreciating the attainments of others, Mrs. Maclaurin joined a violence of temper, and an impatience under even the most puerile trials, which wholly precluded the possibility of peace to those who were domesticated with her. The least difference of opinion, although implied only by silence, was warmly resented, and severely punished by bursts of angry abuse, that would not have shamed the vituperative powers of the most accomplished professors of that

art in the famed purlieus of Billingsgate. A bed less comfortable than the one to which she had been accustomed to at home, or a repast less luxurious, produced the worst effect on her temper; and, unable, from her ignorance of their language, to express her rage to the astonished courier who attended her, or to the innkeepers at whose houses she stopped, the unfortunate Mrs. Bernard was commanded to interpret the abuse lavished on them by her imperious protectress, that lady narrowly watching the countenances of those lectured, in order to judge of the effect produced on them by her displeasure. If she found that their looks did not denote the extent of dismay which she calculated her anger ought to excite, she immediately concluded that Mrs. Bernard had not faithfully interpreted her words, and she consequently lavished on the defenceless head of that poor woman every epithet of reproach which her imagination, fertile in abuse, could invent, and her tongue, habituated to low language, give utterance. The indispositions, originating in repletion—and they were neither few nor far between—which assailed Mrs. Maclaurin, increased the acerbity of this coarse-minded and grossly selfish woman, who, having formed the most erroneous notions of France and Italy, became half frantic when she found how little the reality corresponded with her preconceived ideas. "Why didn't you tell me that there wasn't a decent inn on the whole route?" would she exclaim, while looking daggers at her unfortunate *dame de compagnie*. "If I had known that there wasn't a good four-post bed with chintz curtains to be found at every sleeping-

place, and a rich soup, turbot with lobster sauce, or cod fish with oysters, and fat roast beef or mutton, I'd never have been such a fool as to come to France or Italy. And then their abominable sour light wines, for all the world like vinegar mixed with our claret and water, is enough to injure the best health." If Mrs. Bernard attempted to explain that, never previously having been in France or Italy, she was not aware of the difference between the inns in these countries and in England, she was instantly stopped by a "Don't tell me such nonsense! It's no excuse, for it was your business to have found out all about the inns, and to have warned me against exposing my health by venturing into such places."

The fact was, Mrs. Maclaurin, like all *parvenues*, unaccustomed in her youth even to common comforts, had, since her accession to wealth, and, above all, since the death of her husband had released her from all constraint, become a regular *gourmande*. Her dinner was a weighty consideration with her, her breakfast and luncheon scarcely less important, and when disappointed in the degree of expected excellence of any of these repasts, her temper became insupportable, and Mrs. Bernard was the victim to its ungovernable fury. Prosperity had, as is often the case with persons naturally of an unamiable nature, drawn forth all the bad qualities of Mrs. Maclaurin. Wholly bent on gratifying her own selfish tastes, she was utterly regardless of the feelings of others, and thought that those around her were only created to minister to her comforts and pleasures.

Such was the woman to whom the sordid views of

Lord Alexander Beaulieu were directed; and neither the rumours of her low origin, vulgar habits, nor disagreeable appearance, could deter him from seeking to win the golden prize, for wealth, in his eyes, as in those of many of his class, was the end and aim of all his aspirations, and to acquire which he was willing to take the odious incumbrance attached to it.

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh! blessed day, when first young virgin lips
Confess affection, while the blushing cheek
Wears Modesty's own hue, and downcast eyes
Would fain conceal the love that beams in them;
And the small hand that, in the lover's grasp,
Trembles like timid bird when first 'tis caught
By some young truant, yet resigns itself
Unto its captor! O, what dulcet words
Are those low murmured, and but half distinct
Replies, that yield assent to fond demands!

We left Strathern and the fair object of his affection in all the delight consequent on a perfect *éclaircissement* of the state of their mutual feelings. There is, perhaps, no epoch in the lives of lovers so bright and unalloyed as that in which, after all the doubts and fears ever attendant on true passion are removed, they have unburthened their hearts to each other, and a sweet and tender confidence has replaced the harassing anxiety previously entertained. Each, now sure of the love of the other, beholds only happiness in the present, and rapture in the future; and the knowledge of mutual affection has not yet degenerated into the positive certainty which so often gives a lover more the air of a husband of a year old, than of one

who counts the moments until he can lead the mistress of his heart to the hymeneal altar.

Every object now assumed a different aspect to the eyes of Strathern and the fair Louisa, beheld through the bright medium of mutual love; and happy themselves, they were disposed to render all around them so. The next day Strathern sought a private interview with Mrs. Sydney, and revealed to her his passion for her lovely daughter, and the permission she had accorded him to address himself to her mother on the subject. The fond and anxious parent listened with satisfaction to the statement, for among all the suitors who had sought to win her daughter's heart Strathern was the one she preferred.

When he had unbosomed himself to her, she left him, and proceeded to Louisa's chamber, who, on seeing her enter, and anticipating all that had occurred, rose, and throwing herself into her mother's arms, hid her blushing face on the maternal breast that had so often pillowed her head in infancy, and wept tears free from sorrow, tears that fell on her fair cheeks like dewdrops on flowers, only making them more attractive than before. Mrs. Sydney led her daughter to the room where she had left Strathern, and joining their hands and pronouncing a mother's benediction on both, she was pressed in their arms, and assured by Strathern that, instead of losing a daughter by the proposed union, she would find that she had gained a son, whose study it would henceforth be to prove his gratitude for the treasure she had consented to accord him. A total change seemed to have been operated in Louisa Sydney. The coldness and

reserve which had formerly thrown a shade over her had now wholly disappeared, and, like some rare and precious exotic, whose petals, long denied the cheering influence of sunshine, had closed, and who now, basking in its bright rays, opened its heart again to the genial warmth, she assumed a new beauty, and fascinated her lover more than ever, as he marked the transformation effected in her by the affection he had inspired in her youthful and guileless heart. Every day, every hour, was now fraught with happiness to the lovers. Constantly together, they parted at night with a regret as if the separation was to be a long one, and eagerly longed for the morning's meeting, to resume those confidential conversations which endeared, while revealing, the feelings of each to the other. How many things had they to say which, though they might appear puerile to indifferent persons, were full of interest to them! How often was their first interview referred to, and how often was detailed the impression each had formed relative to the other!

"I thought you so proud, and imagined that you felt certain of making conquests," would Louisa say, while she suffered her little white hand to rest in that of Strathern, "that I determined not to like you, however agreeable you might be."

And the little white hand was pressed to his lips, and he whispered, "You were so cold, so haughty! How could you be so cruel, so stern, Louisa? You must have seen from the first how much I admired—loved you; and yet not one look or smile would you accord me for weeks."

And Mrs. Sydney would smile as she witnessed

their happiness. But hers was a melancholy smile, for she remembered when a similar felicity was her own, when one as young and fond as Strathern wooed and won her youthful affection, and with whom, having enjoyed a few years of as much felicity as was ever granted to any of Earth's daughters, she had the misery to see snatched from her by ruthless death. She thought how *he*, who had so long filled an untimely grave, would, had life been spared him, have shared her satisfaction at beholding his daughter chosen by a man in every way so deserving of her hand, and how their own happiness would have been increased by witnessing the reflection of it in their children's. How frequently are sad and tender recollections, that sometimes slumber, but never die, awakened by passing events! "How would the departed one have felt on such an occurrence?" is a question which the bereaved heart often asks of itself; and, although new trials and sorrows make one feel thankful that the beloved dead have been spared them, aught that gives pleasure reminds us that those who would have shared it have fled from earth, and we sigh while wondering how, after such bereavements, we can still feel pleasure. Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Mrs. Sydney, as she listened to the betrothed lovers drawing fair plans for the future, that future which Heaven in mercy has veiled from our sight. And she, too, had counted on futurity; and one now sleeping in the tomb had sketched as bright pictures of felicity as Strathern was now drawing, and she had relied on their fulfilment as implicitly as her daughter now did; yet in a few

brief years how had those fair hopes been dashed to the earth, and her life embittered by the loss of him on whom all her happiness was based! These sad reflections Mrs. Sydney confined to her own breast, unwilling to cloud even for a moment the sunshine in which Louisa now basked, but ardently did she pray to the Almighty that the destiny of her child might prove a more fortunate one than her own, and that she might be saved that heaviest of all afflictions to a loving heart, the outliving the object of its most tender affection.

Strathern pressed for an early period for the ratification of his happiness; but Louisa refused to abridge the term originally named, being that of her reaching her eighteenth year, which wanted six months to its completion. At that period, Mrs. Sydney and her daughter were to return to England, where the marriage was to be solemnized, and to this arrangement the impatient lover, however reluctant, was compelled to yield an assent. And now, as an accepted suitor, Strathern was privileged to be in constant attendance on Mrs. and Miss Sydney, each day rendering his society more agreeable to them, as his noble and endearing qualities were revealed, and making him more anxious to call the lovely Louisa his. Together they visited the studios, and inspected the progress of the works executing for Strathern House; and again and again they loitered among the interesting ruins with which Rome abounds, or in the churches so rich in objects of art, and so fraught with interest to reflecting minds.

A true passion, however successful, always engen-

ders a certain pensiveness in the hearts of those who feel it; but this sentiment is not without its own peculiar charms, and both Strathern and Louisa Sydney were fully conscious of its soothing influence. Often would a silence, more eloquent than words, betray the tender sympathy that linked their fond hearts together, when a pressure of the hand, or a glance in which the soul shone forth, supplied the place of speech. "Before I knew you, dearest," would Strathern say, "the sight of these ruins awakened only reflections on the mutability of human greatness, and the nothingness of grandeur and power. But now they remind me of the brevity of life; and, for the first time, the remembrance has become painful, because it forces on me the consciousness of how frail is the tenure of happiness, how uncertain its duration. When love, such as I feel for you, takes possession of the heart, the desire for immortality enters with it. To contemplate the possibility of existence without you appals me, and yet to how many dangers is life daily exposed! I think of this when I behold the wrecks of bygone ages around us, and I can no longer philosophize on them as once I could."

"Philosophy, dearest, offers but little consolation for such *triste* reflections. Let us seek comfort where only it can be found, in the blessed hope permitted us that, though happiness on earth is fugitive, and at best of brief duration, in another world we may together enjoy that immortality which love vainly thirsts for here. Who that really, truly loves, can help turning his thoughts to that purer, brighter sphere, where no dread intrudes, where no partings are?" would Louisa

reply; and, as Strathern gazed on her fair and open brow and mildly beaming eyes, he acknowledged that Heaven manifests few greater favours towards erring men, than when it vouchsafes them a creature like her before him, to lead them to think of and prepare for that world to which every day, every hour, brings them nearer. He looked on Louisa as an angel sent to conduct him through the thorny path of life to that heaven to which she seemed to belong, and a sentiment of reverence was mingled with the deep love he entertained for her.

One evening, when the weather was unusually mild for the season, Mrs. Sydney proposed that they should visit the Coliseum by moonlight. This was a pleasure that her daughter had long desired, but which the careful mother denied, lest the night-air might visit too roughly that cherished being on whose existence her own might be truly said to depend. An Indian shawl was folded around her graceful form, and Strathern busied himself in arranging it, so as to exclude the air. Mrs. Sydney's eyes glistened as she noted his watchful care of their mutual treasure, and Louisa smiled while saying, "You will spoil me, indeed you will, by making as great a fuss about me as dear mamma does."

Nor was Strathern exclusively devoted to his betrothed. Her mother was tenderly cared for, and Louisa never felt so convinced of his attachment and so grateful for it as when these gratifying proofs of his affection and respect for her parent were evinced by him.

Never was there a more propitious night for seeing

the Coliseum than the one selected by Mrs. Sydney. The moon rose with peculiar splendour in a sky blue and clear as sapphire, and shed her silvery light over portions of the noble edifice, leaving other parts in deep shadow. In the arena, where once the gladiators mingled their blood with that of the ferocious animals to whom they were opposed, and the vast building echoed back the shouts of the brutal multitude, excited by the sight of the fierce combat, now rose the simple altars dedicated to the Deity, and the voice of the white-robed priest offering up prayers alone was heard mid the stillness of night. The scene was an impressive one, and the feelings of the three individuals who now slowly and silently paced the spot were in harmony with it. But not long were they suffered to enjoy the reflections such a view was so well calculated to awaken. Loud laughter and the sounds of English voices painfully broke in upon their meditations, and, before they had time to retreat, and so avoid, as they wished to do, a rencontre with the persons whose rude mirth denoted such an uncongeniality with their own feelings, the following dialogue became audible to their ears:—

"I wish I had brought my air-gun, that I might have had a few shots at the owls, which I am sure must abound in such an old rookery as this."

"Oh, heavens, Fitzwarren! what an idea! How anti-poetic!"

"Why, what is one to do here, I should like to know? It would be all very well if there was any fun going on—a sparring-match, a bull-fight, ay, or even a cock-fight; but to go stumbling over loose stones, with nothing but those ruined walls to look on, and

nothing but the nasal twang of the priest mumbling his prayers over in a language one does not understand, is to me a most unaccountable fancy."

"But every one makes a point to visit the Coliseum by moonlight once, at least, before leaving Rome," observed Lady Olivia.

"But what for?" rejoined Lord Fitzwarren, "unless it be to catch a cold in such a damp place."

"Read what Lord Byron says of the Coliseum, in the third Canto of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,'" said the lady, "and then you will understand why people love to come here by moonlight."

"So I am to read a poem, a thing I never do when I can help it, in order to know why a pack of moon-struck fools come here of a damp night, to go home coughing, wheezing, and sneezing with colds, that may make them wish they had stayed within doors. It was all very well for Byron to write verses on such subjects—he was lame, poor devil, and consequently could not amuse himself with field-sports, as every manly fellow ought to do; and, besides, he got, I have heard, plenty of money for his scribbling; but for rational people to come here is another affair."

"Think of five thousand wild beasts having been killed in the arena on the day when it was first opened," said Lady Olivia, with an erudite air.

"And good sport it must have been, too," remarked Lord Fitzwarren. "The Coliseum might *then* have been worth coming to see."

"You of course know that this building was erected by Flavius Vespasian, and is supposed to stand where once were the fish-ponds of Nero."

"By Jove, I know nothing about the matter!"

"It is supposed to have derived its name from a colossal statue of Nero in the character of Apollo, which was placed here by Titus Vespasian," said Lady Olivia, pompously.

"Why hang me if little Livy does not bid fair to be as great a historian as her namesake; but how or where she has picked up all her knowledge surprises me."

"Where you may acquire it in a few minutes, if you wish," said Lady Sophia, spitefully—"in the travels of Mariana Starke, which I saw her consulting to-day, when it was settled that we were to come here; and she has given you the fruit of her study, verbatim from the book."

"Better know something of the places one is to see, than be, like you, totally ignorant of them," replied Lady Olivia, her cheek becoming red with anger, as she glanced fiercely at her sister.

"Yes, perhaps it is better," answered Lady Sophia; "but it is not quite fair to give the exact words of the guide-book with an air of learning, as if you were a regular scholar."

And now the vicinity of Strathern and his party became revealed to Lord Fitzwarren and the ladies who accompanied him, and he instantly exclaimed: "What! you here, old boy; and you, ladies? Well, I'm glad to find I'm not the only greenhorn. Now confess the truth, Strathern, is it not a regular bore to come cold-catching here? And you, ladies, can you discover anything now that might not be better seen in broad daylight?"

"Fitzwarren is so delightfully original!" lisped Lady Olivia.

"And so very matter of fact!" added Lady Sophia, sarcastically.

"I must confess I am quite of Lord Fitzwarren's opinion," observed Lady Wellerby, "for I always find the bad effects of the damp night-air, and infinitely prefer seeing ruins by day. Lord Wellerby warned me of the consequences of coming here; he is always so careful, so *prévoyant* for those dear to him! Ah, Mrs. Sydney! there is nothing like a husband for taking care of one—is there?"

Lady Wellerby had discovered that every allusion to affectionate husbands occasioned a pang to Mrs. Sydney, which was betrayed by her cheek becoming paler than usual, and by an involuntary sigh; and, since this discovery, she omitted no opportunity of referring to her own happiness in the possession of a tender partner, a blessing of which that lady was deprived.

"Yes, the old governor is devilish careful, I must confess," said Lord Fitzwarren, "and for a good reason, too. Don't you remember he said that if you brought on a return of your rheumatism, by exposing yourself to the night-air, he would have a doctor and a long apothecary's bill to pay? Yes, the old governor knows what he is about, so don't fancy, my lady, that it is anything but economy that makes him trouble himself about your health."

Lady Wellerby bit her lip, and looked annoyed, and her future son-in-law laughed aloud at her evident discomfiture and his own sagacity. Mrs. Sydney

and her daughter could scarcely forbear smiling, as they noticed the disdainful air assumed by Lady Olivia towards the latter, and her efforts to draw off Lord Fitzwarren's attention from his former flame, while he, as natural as his bride elect was affected, stared at Louisa with undisguised admiration, and remarked aloud that he thought Miss Sydney's face looked by moonlight like the beautiful one of the statue he had seen at Gibson's the day before.

"Hang me, if she doesn't grow handsomer every day!" said he *naïvely* to Lady Olivia, as they walked away from the Coliseum. "That fellow, Strathern, is a deuced lucky dog to have won the heart of such a lovely girl:" and a deep-drawn sigh attested that Lord Fitzwarren felt what he uttered.

How did Lady Olivia long to express her difference of opinion with her future *caro sposo* on this point, for the undisguised admiration he evinced for Louisa Sydney irritated and piqued her vanity! but her prudence prevailed over her vanity, and she consoled herself for not openly dissenting from his sentiments on this occasion, with the determination that, when once the indissoluble knot of wedlock was tied, she would no longer listen in silence to the praises of other women from her lord, and, above all, to those of a girl whom she detested. Lady Sophia, who well knew her sister's character, had observed the mortification inflicted on her by Lord Fitzwarren's admiration of Miss Sydney, and, desirous of repaying some of the many slights and annoyances that Lady Olivia had made her feel ever since he had become her affianced husband, she now joined most warmly in his

commendations of Louisa, and assented to his remarks on the good fortune of Strathern in having won such a bride.

"Yes, he will be the envy of all his acquaintance," said she, "for who can be compared to Miss Sydney? Every woman looks plain near her, and so I thought when I saw her a few minutes ago with the moonlight falling on her beautiful face;" and the speaker glanced spitefully at her sister.

"Little Sophia is right," observed Lord Fitzwarren; "she *does* eclipse every other girl, and Strathern is a deuced lucky dog."

Lady Wellerby looked alarmed, and then made a sign to Lady Sophia to discontinue the subject; but that young person, gratified by witnessing the pain she occasioned to her sister, was by no means disposed to abridge her own satisfaction; and so, affecting not to see her surly mother's telegraphic signals, she continued—"No one has refused so many suitors as Miss Sydney. If rumour speaks truth, she has rejected every bachelor in Rome."

Lord Fitzwarren felt his face grow red, and Lady Olivia looked daggers at her malicious sister.

"Do you believe that she refused so many?" asked Lady Sophia.

"I know nothing about the matter," answered Lord Fitzwarren; "I only know that she did not refuse *me*, and for the best of all reasons—that I did not ask her."

Lady Olivia's brow cleared at this avowal, and she smiled graciously on her future husband.

"I hope, Sophia, you are now convinced that Lord

Fitzwarren was not the rejected suitor of Miss Sydney?" said she, disdainfully.

Lady Sophia shook her head incredulously.

"I never popped the question to any girl except to you, Livy — and, hang me, if I can tell why I did so then!"

"A very flattering speech, I must say," observed Lady Sophia, while her sister bit her lip, and turned red with anger.

"Don't be vexed, Livy—what does it matter now? I *have* proposed—all is arranged, and I dare say we shall get on very well together, for you won't attempt to interfere with my mode of going on, which all the women in the world would not make me change, and I am in the main a devilish good-natured fellow when I have every thing my own way, which I am always determined to have; so we shall be as happy as our neighbours, I dare say," and he shook Lady Olivia's hand kindly.

"I trust that no daughter of mine will ever shame the example and instruction which I have afforded her," said Lady Wellerby, drawing up her head proudly. "Lord Wellerby, after a union of many years, renders me the justice to affirm that to me he owes all his happiness."

"He does, does he? Well, the old governor must know best; but, hang me, if I think that the happiness of any man can depend wholly on a woman! It's a devilish good thing, I grant, to have a sprightly, good-tempered wife, who is always glad to see one's friends, and to make one's house agreeable; but, if a wife happens to be cross-grained and ill-natured, as

some women turn out, why, one can eat a good dinner, drink prime wine, and keep up a jolly night with one's friends in spite of her; and, if she shows temper, keep never minding her, and she'll tire of it. If a wife was a perfect angel, she could not make the happiness of such fellows as me. I must have capital hunters, clever hacks, fine hounds, good huntsman and whipper-in, lively fellows to ride with me; a first-rate cook, choice old wines, large manors, with famous preserves, the best guns, well-bred and well-broke-in dogs, and steady keepers, to make *me* happy. The best wife in the world *without* all these would not render me so; whereas, an indifferent one *with* them could not make me unhappy; and, if you knew half, ay, or three parts, of the fellows I live with in England as well as I do, you'd find that they are of the same way of thinking, though they would not be so open and honest in confessing it as I have been. No, they make women believe, before marriage, that all their felicity depends on them, and so perhaps they themselves fancy, when they first take a liking. But, when the sporting and hunting seasons set in, they become of a different way of thinking, and the poor woman who took for gospel all her husband swore, finds herself left alone at home the whole day, to amuse herself as best she can, and in the evening must be content to see her husband and his friends come late to her tea-table, and hear them talk over the sports of the day, half asleep, and yawning from the effects of the violent exercise they have taken."

"What a picture of the life of a sportsman's wife!"

said Lady Sophia, turning up her eyes; "who would not compassionate such a fate!"

"Some may pretend to despise it," observed Lady Olivia, "who would, in their hearts, be but too glad to have a chance of being the wife of a sportsman!" and she looked angrily at her sister.

"Don't disdain sportsmen, Sophy, for I am determined to find you a husband among my friends one of these days. So study horses, cut out better ones in paper, learn to ride boldly, and leave the rest to me."

"Pray do not trouble yourself on the subject," answered Lady Sophia. "I have no intention of wedding a Nimrod, I assure you, for I am of opinion that it is better to lead apes in a place not to be named to ears polite, than to be tied to a fool on earth."

"Then I am to conclude that you consider sportsmen fools," observed Lord Fitzwarren, angrily.

"Sophia is only jesting," said Lady Wellerby, fearful that her daughter would seriously offend her future son-in-law, and bestowing a stern frown on that young lady, who, previously to her seeking her pillow that night, received a severe lesson from her mother on the injudicious line of conduct she had adopted towards her sister and future brother-in-law.

"He really is so *bête*, that there is no standing his folly," observed Lady Sophia.

"But, as you are not to pass your life with him, why need you mind his eccentricity," rejoined the mamma. "You ought to be too glad to see your sister married off our hands, to find fault with him

who takes her. People will say you are jealous of her good fortune if they see you showing your temper in this manner."

"*Me* jealous! and of what, pray, have I to be jealous?—that she marries a blockhead, who has not two ideas in his head, and who is incapable of thinking or feeling?"

"Nevertheless, you know very well, Sophia, and so do I also, that you would have been very glad had Lord Fitzwarren proposed for you instead of your sister, and that you would gladly have accepted him."

"No, *indeed* I would not!"

"Then, Sophia, you are a greater fool than I took you to be; and the pains you bestowed in endeavouring to please Lord Fitzwarren before he proposed for Olivia is very unaccountable;" and so saying, Lady Wellerby quitted her daughter's room, leaving that young lady highly incensed at her mother's expostulation.

"Olivia is in high favour at present," thought Lady Sophia, "because she has caught that imbecile Fitzwarren. Had I secured him, all the adulation she now receives would have been mine, but a day may come when it will be my turn to be complimented and flattered—would that it were arrived!"

While thus soliloquizing, Lady Olivia entered with a *nonchalant* air, and having seated herself before a mirror, after a pause of some minutes, said, "I wish we were at Paris or in London, for to be a bride elect at Rome is little worth being pleased at. No Storr and Mortimer's—no Howell and James to send

forth every day their delightful green baize bags, filled with *écrins*, whose dazzling contents flash so brightly as to make one forget the absence of sunshine in our nebulous metropolis. Oh! the pleasure of beholding morocco and velvet cases opened one after another for one's approbation—the obsequious clerk holding up each to catch the light, in order that their lustre may be seen to greater advantage! Now he descants on the delicate purity of oriental pearls, and insinuates their appropriateness for certain interesting occasions, reminding the bride and bridegroom elect that the Duke of A., Marquis of B., Earl of C., and Viscount D., presented their *fiancées* with *parures* of these chaste and becoming ornaments. When the pearls have been sufficiently admired, and probably purchased, an *écrin* with sapphires set in diamonds is opened. How learnedly does the wily exhibitor dwell on the deep, rich blue, and velvety appearance of these precious stones!—the unusual size, the freedom from light tints towards the edge, proving the depth of the gem, the brilliant whiteness of the diamonds set around each stone, and the exquisite taste of the mounting. If the bride elect is fair, she is told that sapphires can only be worn by ladies of the fairest complexion; but, if she happens to be a brunette, then their admirable effect on ladies with dark hair is cleverly commented on. Next come emeralds—how brightly green and refreshing to the eye, adding, by the contrast, additional lustre to the diamonds that encircle them! Who could resist emeralds set in diamonds? Not I, for one. The clerk takes advantage of my apparent admiration for

this charming *parure*. He tells how a Russian imperial duke examined, praised, did all but buy it, and how a French *altesse* royal regretted that the recent acquisition of a vast *terre*, which took all his spare thousands, prevented his purchasing it. The Duke of Auburnland, he is quite sure, will buy it for his duchess as soon as he comes to town. What lover could withstand a *parure* coveted by royal and noble dukes? The bowing clerk is asked the price. Answers, 'Very cheap—only ten thousand pounds.' The bridegroom expectant starts a little; evidently *he* does not consider it so very great a bargain, but he is reminded that such jewels become heirlooms in noble families, descending from father to son. The *fiancée* blushes, or, what does as well, affects to do so, and holds down her head, and the lover desires the emeralds to be put aside for his final decision. Another *écrin* is drawn forth and opened, and rubies, rich, red, and glowing, flash among the brilliants. No, there is nothing—positively nothing that can equal rubies, and so every one in the room exclaims. These are of the true tint, neither too dark nor too light. What depth of colour, yet the bright scarlet how vivid!

"'Yes, they *are* unique, my lady. Your ladyship is perfectly correct in pronouncing them to be perfect, and so becoming too. Our house has been many years collecting the stones. We thought we should never be able to match them, but we triumphed over every difficulty, and do not now regret the trouble, although we cannot hope ever to be fully repaid.'

"'What is the price?' asks the future bridegroom, with rather a husband of ten years sort of a face.

"'Your lordship will be surprised when I tell you our demand is so very moderate. Only eighteen thousand pounds.'

"O! that I were in London to enjoy these bridal *douçeurs!*" exclaimed Lady Olivia, breaking off; "then would I feel all the advantages of making a splendid marriage; but here in Rome—with nothing in the shape of ornaments to buy but cameos which are *passée de mode*, mosaics, fit only for the vulgar, and Roman pearls that impose on no one but the foolish purchasers—all the pleasure and solid advantages of a bride elect are lost. Heigh ho!"

"I see you understand Fitzwarren's character sufficiently well, Olivia, to be aware that, when you return to Paris and London, a wife of three months, he will be little disposed to indulge in the extravagant follies committed by men for their chosen wives, *avant*, *pendant*, but not three months *après* marriage."

"What will then avail whether or not he is disposed to be generous to me? As his wife, I shall have unlimited credit, and I mean to take full advantage of this privilege, I can tell you. He may storm when the bills are presented, but he *must* pay, and the things I covet are worth standing a little contest for."

"When a woman marries such an animal as Fitzwarren, she ought to deny herself nothing."

"Yet this same animal, Sophia, you tried every effort to entrap, and you are now dying of envy because I have won him. Do you think that I did not see through your petty malice at the Coliseum

this evening!—your extravagant eulogies of Louisa Sydney and your sneers at Fitzwarren?"

"So no other woman is to be praised in your presence, forsooth, without your taking it as an affront! And as to your stupid lover, who can resist laughing at such a booby?"

"I do not wish to quarrel with you, Sophia, and can make allowance for the disappointment you feel, so I will not continue a conversation so little amusing. *Bon soir*;" and Lady Olivia retired, humming a song.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And wilt thou stoop to such base means for gold?
Forego thine own esteem, the world's respect?—
Think'st thou 'twill silence scorn, or cover shame,
Or give thee happiness? Ah! no, weak man."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu, having taken up his abode in the hotel where Mrs. Maclaurin lodged, set about carrying his plans for forming an acquaintance with that lady into execution. Various schemes suggested themselves to his fertile brain; but, previously to adopting any, he went to *reconnoître le terrain*, that is, to study the *locale* of the landing-place on which the rich widow's spacious suite of apartments, as well as his own small one, opened. While thus occupied, a servant ascended the stairs to answer the bell of Mrs. Maclaurin, and Lord Alexander had barely time to enter the ante-chamber of his own room without being seen, when the domestic having opened the door of his mistress's, her lapdog, unnoticed by him, ran into the passage. In a moment the thought of seizing the animal flashed through the mind of Lord Alexander, who was standing with his door half-ajar. He opened it still wider, and the dog, of its own accord,

ran into his apartment. He quickly closed the door, took up the little creature, and caressed it, glancing at its diamond-set collar, so characteristic of the vulgarity and ostentation of its mistress, but so demonstrative also of her wealth; and the little dog remained perfectly quiescent in his arms. He, after a few minutes, locked it up in his bed-chamber, the most remote room from those occupied by Mrs. Maclaurin, and then he stationed himself inside the door of the anteroom, leaving it ajar, that he might hear what was going on outside. Soon the cry of "Bijou!" "Bijou!" was echoed around. The bell of Mrs. Maclaurin's *salon* was loudly rang, servants were heard running in every direction, and the voice of Mrs. Bernard was audible, humbly entreating the servants to search everywhere for the dog, while that of Mrs. Maclaurin, loud, coarse, and menacing, half-drowned it as she uttered invectives on the carelessness and stupidity of each of her suite, but, above all, on Mrs. Bernard, for having allowed the dog to go out of her sight.

"*Ah! quel malheur!*" exclaimed the *femme de chambre*, who now joined the group. "De moost bootifool *leetle* dogue in de vorld. Vat peety madame not leave him vid me! I so lofe him I vould not never let him leave my eyes. And *de superbe collier* vid all de *diamants*. Oh! Mon Dieu! Some vone steal him for de *collier*, and kill him. Vat a peety Madame Bernard did not take care of de dear bootifool aneemal!"

"She is right; 'twas all your fault," said Mrs. Maclaurin. "Have I not often told you not to let the precious darling leave the room without a servant to guard it?"

"I was engaged on the letter you commanded me to write, madam."

"A fine excuse, truly! Could you not hold the dog on your knee while you were writing, or, at all events, keep your eye on him? What's the good of a companion, or a 'dam de company,' as the French call it, except to ring the bell or look after one's lap-dog?"

"*Ah! madame, que je suis fâchée!* If madame do as I say, she never lose de dear leetle dogue."

"What's the use of telling me so now?" said Mrs. Maclaurin; "you only do it to vex me. Don't stand staring there, all of you, like stuck pigs, but run in every direction until you find my darling Bijou. I'd rather you were all in the bottom of the sea than have my dog lost—and the collar too, that cost me such a sum! No one was ever so bothered with servants as I am: always plaguing and tormenting me with your stupidity and negligence."

"Had we not better offer a reward to any one who will bring the dog to you, madam?" asked Mrs. Bernard, in the meekest tone of voice possible.

"Offer a reward, indeed! Why, you must be a downright fool. What but a very large sum would tempt any rogue who might find it to resign the valuable collar, which, if broken up, would sell for a considerable price?"

"A hint that shall not be lost if ever this same collar falls in my way," thought the *laquais de place*, who had acquired enough English to comprehend Mrs. Maclaurin's unwise observation, and whose cupidity had been excited by it.

All the servants had, in obedience to the commands of their imperious mistress, gone in different directions to search for Bijou, and Mrs. Bernard alone remained to bear the brunt of that vulgar woman's anger. Loud and coarse were the invectives which she uttered, while the affrighted *dame de compagnie* stood, pale and trembling, before her, not daring to answer, or endeavour to stem the torrent of reproach which, now the floodgate of Mrs. Maclaurin's wrath was opened, poured on the defenceless head—"Indeed, madam..."

"Don't tell me any of your nonsense; it's of no use, I can assure you, for I am not to be wheedled out of my just anger. It was your place to keep a strict watch on my dog, and you pretend, forsooth, that you could not do this while writing a letter; as if with two eyes you could not see to write with one, and watch the dog with the other!"

This ignorance of the law of optics would have forced a smile from any one less timid and nervous than Mrs. Bernard, but it only made her feel how unavailing and hopeless any attempt to reason with such a woman as Mrs. Maclaurin must prove. Encouraged by her silence, that lady resumed her lecture.

"You are," exclaimed she, "the most provokingly stupid woman I ever had the misfortune to meet with, and are the plague and torment of my life. Send Justing (her mode of pronouncing Justine), for she has some sense, and may be able to tell me what had best be done."

"Yes, I'm a miserable woman, and that's the truth of it," said Mrs. Maclaurin, when her luckless *dame*

de compagnie had left the room. "Everything goes wrong, and everybody seems to have joined to vex and bother me. I can get nothing that I like to eat or drink. A pack of nasty French messes are served to me every day that it makes me sick to look at, and a weak, nasty, sour stuff, with out-of-the-way names, which they pass off for wine, and for which I am charged extravagant prices, makes me positively ill. Then I am taken to look at churches so like each other that, except St. Peter's, I don't know one from another, and old ruins, about which the lacky, as they call him, prates by the hour without my understanding one word he says. I don't know how to amuse myself or pass away the time, although I go to see everything that is to be seen, and have four regular meals a-day. If it wasn't for the time I spend in eating, dressing, and scolding, I am sure I'd die of *annuy*, as Justing says. I wish I had not left England, for that's the only place, after all, for people like me who have plenty of money. I'd go back at once, only I'm afraid people would laugh at me, for every one pretends to like Rome, tho' I'm sure they don't in their hearts. Heigh ho! how tired I am of foreign parts; and now to lose Bijou, and the collar that cost me such a mint of money! I'd rather twice have lost the dog than the collar, which I bought just to show the proud duchesses and countesses in London that, while they had only gold or silver collars for their dogs, I could have a diamond one for mine. Yes, I quite cut them out, that I did, and I saw in the park how spiteful they used to look, though they pretended to laugh. Who'd ever believe, at

Ballymacrash, that Molly Malowny had a lapdog with a diamond collar!"

Not a word of this soliloquy was lost on Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who, having left his door ajar, and ensconced himself behind it, could distinctly hear it, owing to the door of Mrs. Maclaurin's room not being closed. He could have smiled at this *exposé* of her innate vulgarity, had he not been more intent on the advantage it gave him as furnishing him a perfect insight to her character—an insight of which he fully determined to take advantage with as little delay as possible. Justine now attended her mistress, followed by the melancholy Mrs. Bernard, whose countenance denoted her dread of anticipated insult. "What is to be done, Justine?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin. "I might put up with the loss of Bijou, for, after all, I never cared much about dogs, and only had this one because I saw so many grand ladies in London had them; but to lose the diamond collar is what vexes me."

"*Oui, madame, je conçois;* dat is, I understand you do like de diamonds better dan de dogue. Vat you best do is to write one *affiche*—vat you call advertisement—and offer de revard to whoever brings you de collar vide de dogue."

"Or the collar without the dog," interrupted Mrs. Maclaurin.

"*Comme vous voudrez*, madame, that is, as you veel; but peoples veel laugh so vera moche ven dey see you lofe de collar more dan de dog; I do not advise you do dat."

"Write an advertisement immediately, Mrs. Ber-

nard, and write just what I say. 'A lady of fashion having lost her lapdog, which had on a diamond collar, she will give a reward of twenty pounds to any one who will bring back the collar and the dog.' And now put 'The diamonds are not real ones, though they look as if they were.' That's a good hit, isn't it, Justing?"

"Madame is so vera clever—vera clever, indeed."

"Yes, Justing; I'm no fool, am I?"

"Foole, madame! you are de most clever lady I never seed."

"Have you written the advertisement?"

"Yes, madam, here it is."

"Ring the bell, and send the lackey with it to the newspapers, and let it also be cried by the bellman. Write another notice for the bellman, and begin, 'Stolen or strayed, lost or mislaid, a diamond collar, with a dog. *Nota bene*.—The diamonds are all false.'"

"I believe, madam, that there are no town-criers at Rome."

"And if dere vas, it vould not do to let de English milors and miladies tink your bootifool collar, vat is so moche admired by everybody, vas false; dat would make dem all tink you not so *riche* nor so *grande dame*."

"You are right, Justing, quite right. Why do you never give me such good advice as Justing does, Mrs. Bernard, I should like to know?"

"I am fearful of giving you offence, madam."

"Fearful of fiddlesticks! Don't tell me a pack of stuff and nonsense, when you know in your heart you drive me half out of my senses every day of my life by your stupidity and folly."

"*Pauvre chère dame;* nobody ought to vex madame, it make her look very bad in de face, spoil her beauty, and prevent all de pretty caps, and *toques*, and turbans from becoming her. Madame is *charmante* ven she is not vex."

"Do you hear that, Mrs. Bernard? Justing is quite right; you make a perfect fright of me by putting me in such passions."

"I assure you, madam, that it gives me the greatest pain to disoblige you; and, when I am so unfortunate as to do so, it is quite unintentional."

"So you always say; but what's the difference to me, when I am put in a passion, whether you intended it or not, I should like to know?"

"Madame has de *raison*, and say vat is right;" and the artful Justine looked reproachfully at poor Mrs. Bernard.

"If every one about me would think only of pleasing me, and guessing what I like to be said and done, I should never get into a passion," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, "should I, Justing?"

"No, madame, you vould not; and den you vould be so handsome, so vera handsome!"

"You may take that brown velvet dress of mine, Justing, that was made at Paris; I shan't wear it any more."

"*Merci, madame.* Madame is so goot, so *aimable* to her *pauvre* Justine!"

"If all those about me," and Mrs. Maclaurin looked sternly at Mrs. Bernard, "were as attentive and clever as you are, Justing, I should always be in good humour. It would be so easy for people to

guess what I like. You always do, I must say, Justing."

"*Madame est trop bonne*, and so I always tell all de oder *femmes de chambre*, in all de *auberges* vat ve come to. Miladi is de best in all de vorld, I say. So elegante, so handsome, so generous, and so *comme il faut*; and den all de oder *femmes de chambre sont si jalouses*; dat is, be so jealous — ven de see *de belles robes*, de elegante dresses Madame gives to me; and, I say, your *maitresses* do not give you such fine clothes, your *maitresses* not so riche as mine is, and dat vex dem ever so."

"You may take the blue velvet bonnet with the black lace, Justing. I don't think it becomes me so well as my other bonnets do."

"*Merci, madame. Comme madame est bonne!*"

"I wish, Mrs. Bernard, you would follow Justing's example, and dress as well as she does. She is always perfectly well dressed, while you are absolutely shabby. The dam di company of a lady like me should always be elegantly dressed to do credit to me."

"I wish I could afford to make a better appearance, madam, but my means are limited. I trust, however, that I am always scrupulously clean."

"You deserve no credit for that, for you well know I would not keep you if you were not."

Justine could not conceal her triumph at being a witness to the contemptuous treatment the innocent and unoffending object of her dislike experienced at the hands of her mistress, and glanced with an ironical smile at Mrs. Bernard.

"If you are so poor as not to be able to buy yourself a bonnet and cloak fit to be seen in when you go out with me, I will advance you a quarter's wages; though it is a thing I do not much like doing, for it makes people think they are to be kept for a long time, and I have lost money when I suddenly discharged servants to whom I had advanced cash."

"If you will permit me, madam, I would rather not receive money in advance, for I really cannot afford purchasing a new bonnet and cloak, after having so recently bought both at Paris by your recommendation."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu had now heard enough to be perfectly *au fait* of the character of the woman to whose riches he aspired, and to be able to judge of her *dame de compagnie* and *femme de chambre*. The first, he clearly perceived, possessed not the least influence with Mrs. Maclaurin, consequently it would be wholly unnecessary for him to conciliate her; but the second he saw could perfectly manage her, and he determined to secure the good-will of the artful Justine. He now enveloped himself in a large cloak, beneath which he placed Bijou, having first taken the precaution of binding a silk handkerchief over her jaws to prevent her barking. He sallied forth into one of the least frequented streets, and, having remained long enough absent to give a colour to his scheme, he returned to the hotel, and sent his card by his servant, with a request for an audience with that lady.

"What a *real* lord?" exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin. "Read the name over again, Mrs. Bernard! Lord! how well it sounds — quite like Alexander the Great,

that Curnel Fairfax used to be reading aloud about. Tell the servant his lordship's company will give me great pleasure. Ring the bell, quick, Mrs. Bernard—how you crawl! no, run and send Justing to my dressing-room. Well, now, how provoking that I should not have put on to-day my new crimson velvet gown with the lace I paid such a price for at Paris, instead of this purple velvet one, which I have worn two or three times. Oh, dear! how vexatious!"

Mrs. Maclaurin ran off to her dressing-room, exclaiming, the moment she entered it, half breathless with emotion, "Give me, Justing, my diamond earrings and the small feron—what do ye call it?"

"Fèronière, madame."

"Yes, I always forget the name. There, fasten it! Now put in my earrings, and give me my lace cap with the crimson dalys (dahlias) and point-lace collar. Oh, I forgot! give me my diamond chain and bracelets, for before a lord I should like to appear what you call *com il foe*. There, that will do, Justing. How do I look?"

"*Charmante*, madame—bootifool!"

Mrs. Maclaurin hurried back to her saloon, where she found Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who bowed respectfully as she entered.

"How do you do, my lord," said she; "I hope your lordship is quite well. Won't your lordship take a seat?"

"I have taken the liberty of calling on you, madam, to....."

"Not the laste liberty in life; sure, ain't I glad, and proud too, to have a visit from your lordship?"

"I should not have ventured to present myself, madam, had I not fortunately the power to restore you something precious which you have lately lost."

"The diamond collar — the diamond collar of my dog! Ah! then have you found it — has your lordship really found it?"

"Yes, madam, and the dog too."

"Oh, for the matter of that, dogs are not scarce! there's always plenty of them to be had; but diamonds are dear things, and, as your lordship truly said, something precious; and, though I have plenty of diamonds, and money enough to buy as many as I please, still it vexed me to have lost what cost me so much. I paid five hundred pounds ready money—I always make it a rule to pay ready money for every thing I buy—for that same collar; and I believe there is not a lady in England that ever paid half that sum for a dog-collar."

"I am happy, madam, to have the power of restoring it to you uninjured."

"And how, my lord, did your lordship find it?"

"Taking a walk in the Piazza de Navona, I saw a man running along with the dog in his arms. I instantly recognised the animal to be yours, and . . ."

"How did your lordship know it to be mine? I did not think we had ever met before."

"You, madam, probably never noticed me, but who that has once seen *you* could ever forget you?"

"Oh, my lord, you flatter me!"

"No, madam, I would not on any account presume to do so. I only asserted the simple fact, that, once seen, Mrs. Maclaurin can never be forgotten. I did

not know your name when I was so fortunate as to render you this little service, and only learned it when I returned to this hotel, where I also lodge. I stopped the man, and told him he must deliver the dog to me. He said he had found it in the street, and would not surrender it without a reward. I was only too happy to pay him his demand, and I brought the dog here with me, intending to ascertain where you might be found, when, on inquiry, I discovered that you inhabited the same hotel as myself. Fearing that a lady of your delicacy and refinement might be too much agitated if I abruptly brought the dog into your presence, I took the precaution of leaving it in my room, and, with your permission, I will now go and bring him."

"Oh, my lord! how shall I ever thank you enough?"

"Pray don't mention it, madam."

"But you must let me repay the sum you gave the man."

"Pardon me, madam, you must allow me to decline accepting any remuneration. It was a mere *bagatelle*—fifty pounds—not worth mentioning;" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu withdrew, and immediately returned with Bijou.

The first thing Mrs. Maclaurin did was carefully to examine the collar, and great was her satisfaction when she found that it was uninjured. She then addressed a few words to the dog, and renewed her thanks to Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"I am here quite alone, my lord, only my dam di company, and my soot of servants with me; and I

feel so solintary and dull, that I heartily wish myself back in England again. Rome is not the place I took it to be, by no means ; I thought it was quite a gay place like Brighton, but only genteeler, from being so far off that common people could not afford to come to it, and that there would be master of the ceremony's balls, and concerts, and raffles at the circulating libraries, and all manner of other amusements going on ; but, instead of that, I find no sort of diversion, and am as dull as ditchwater."

" If I might presume to hope that my visits would not be unacceptable, I need not say how much happiness it would give me to assist to enliven your solitude."

" Oh ! my lord, how kind and condescending your lordship is ! I am delighted to be acquainted with a nobleman so polite and genteel, and if your lordship will come and dine with me to-day, I shall be proud and happy to receive you."

" You are too good, madam ; and although I have an engagement of long standing, I will disengage myself, and have the honour of waiting on you."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu took his leave, throwing as much *empressement* and *tendresse* into his looks and manner as he could, fully convinced that he had made a most favourable impression on Mrs. Maclaurin ; and for once his vanity did not mislead him. A lord, and, above all, the first one with whom she had ever conversed, could not fail to become an object of the greatest interest to the vulgar-minded *parvenue ;* but when he happened, as in the present instance, to be tolerably good-looking, and to have an air and manner

infinitely superior to that of the few men with whom Mrs. Maclaurin had been acquainted in England, it cannot be wondered at that he appeared nothing short of perfection in her eyes. She ran to the mirror, the moment he had left the room, to see if her looks were satisfactory, and after a few minutes' contemplation of the image it reflected, which seemed to afford her the most perfect gratification, she desired Mrs. Bernard to ring the bell, and command the best dinner that could be had.

"Tell them to have turtle, and venison, and every other delicacy of the season, and not to mind expense; and to have champagne put in ice."

"I fear, madam, these are dainties not to be procured at Rome."

"What! not be able to get turtle and venison? What a horrid country!"

She then went to her dressing-room, when, having rang for the attendance of Justine, she entered into a consultation with her, relative to her toilette.

"Did you ever know a lord, a real lord, Justing!" said she.

"*Oui, madame*, several."

"And don't you think they are quite different from other men? So elegant, and so genteel."

"I have known some lords who be vera polite, *très bien elevé*."

"Oh, they are all elevated, you know."

"I do not mean dat, madame."

"Ah! I guess what you mean, Justing; you mean that they are sometimes a little elevated, that they

drink too much wine. You have heard, I dare say, of the saying 'as drunk as a lord.'"

"No, madame, I not believe dat de milors drink moche more dan oder mens."

"Well, it's no matter what you meant; but it is of great consequence that I should be elegantly dressed to-day, for I have engaged Lord Alexander Bowler to dinner. Oh! he's such a handsome man, and so polite! He found Bijou, and the collar is quite safe; and he gave fifty pounds to the man who stole it to give it up to him, all because he knew the dog was mine. Was not that good of him?"

"But who vas de person dat did present dis milor to you, madame?"

"Himself, to be sure."

"*Ma foi!* Dat vas *un peu trop sans cérémonie*."

"What's that you say? You always forget I don't understand French."

"I said, madame, dat it vas too leetle ceremonie for milor to present himself to you vidout knowing you before, or asking some lady or gentleman to present him."

"Lords have no occasion for ceremony, Justing; they know it's an honour to be acquainted with them, so they go and visit who they like."

"*Quelle drôle de chose!*"

"Droll shows—he did not say any thing about them; but if there are any at Rome, I'll ask him to escort me to see them. I'll put on my diamond necklace, Justing—No, on second thought, I'll wear my pearls; for, as he saw my diamond earrings, chain, and head ornaments, just now 'twill be as well to let him see

that I have other things. Oh! Justing, he's such a handsome man, and so genteel!"

"*Eh bien, madame.*"

"What's bang?"

"I not know de exact English. I begin to tink, madame, you lofe dis milor."

"Ah! Justing, if *he* loved me!"

"*Peut-être* he does, madame."

"I wish I was sure he did, and I should be happy. Only fancy having such a husband, Justing, and to be called 'my lady,' and 'your ladyship;' and to have a coronet on my carriage, and on the buttons of my servants' coats. Oh! what happiness it would be! And to have my lord giving me his arm wherever I went. Wouldn't I be a happy woman?

"*Ah! ça dépend, madame,....*"

"Do, Justing, speak English; you put me out of all patience when you say what I can't understand."

"Vell, madame, vat I say is, dat moche depends if dis milor lofe you truly, and not because he hear you have moche money."

"Why you talk for all the world, Justing, as if I was an old woman, and not fit to be looked at. Why shouldn't Lord Alexander Bowler love me truly?"

And Mrs. Maclaurin's face grew red with anger. The artful femme de chambre saw that she had gone too far in her zeal to infuse doubts of the sincerity of Lord Alexander Beaulieu into the mind of her mistress, and, anxious to repair this *maladresse*, she immediately had recourse to flattery.

"Dere is not no reason vy milor should not lofe madame *à la folie*, nor vy all men should not do de

same, for madame is bootifool enough to *faire les grandes passions*—dat is, to make all de men in de vorld lofe her, but I hear of so many milors who spend de large fortunes, and den vant to marry de *riches veuves* dat dey may have more money to spend."

"It is very wrong, Justing, for people to say such things of the harystockcracy."

"I not know dat madame vas so great an aristocrat."

"I wish I did belong to the harystockcracy; but perhaps I may, one day or other, Justing." And Mrs. Maclaurin drew herself up with as dignified an air as she could assume.

"Madame vould *certainement* do honour to the *pairie*—dat is, to de pireage, I most say," observed Justine; and her mistress looked at herself in the mirror, and smiled complacently.

"Aha! madame, I see how it is, dis milor have touched your heart, or, vat is more likely, his title has touched it;" said the wily femme de chambre to herself, when left alone to her own reflections. "*Voyons*, vould it be better for me dat she marry or not? If dis milor is generous, *comme il faut* and *aimable*, it would perhaps be best dat she do marry him; but if, *au contraire*, he is *ladre*, *méchant*, *et mal elevé*, it vould be vera bad for me. I sall soon see. If he has one *valet de chambre*, I vill make *connoissance avec lui*, and learn all about his mastere. Ve *femmes de chambre* know vat ve are about, and can soon find out every ting ve vant to know. *Quelle femme vulgaire est ma maîtresse!* How she was pleased at a visit from a milor! She seem as though she never

spoke to milor before. And she put on her diamonds in de morning, to receive von *visite*, *quelle horreur*, and vil vear a *parure* at dinner, vid only dis milor and dat *bête*, Madame Bernard, fit for a *grande* reception. It is in vain I do tell her dat de ladies *de bon ton* never do vear de grande *parures*, except *en grande toilette*, and dat for de petit *dîner* et soirées dey vear de *demi toilette*, vid de robes *beaucoup plus simples*, de long sleeves, and not *décolletée*; but de *dames Anglais* have de rage to be always too moche dressed and too leetle, as the Prince de Talleyrand did say, deir robes begin too late and end too soon. Oh! how I laugh ven de valet de chambre of de prince tell me dis; 'tis so true, for many of de *dames Anglais* vear deir dress moche too low on de shoulders and bust, and moche too short in de petticoat. Vell, vell, I know dat if dis milor have de thought to marry my *maîtresse*, he had better *faire la cour* a leetle to me, for if he do not, I vill make madame refuse him. No, no, she sall only marry who I vish. But probablement he never tink of dis foolish vulgaire voman. *Nous verrons, nous verrons.*"

While Justine was indulging in her soliloquy, Mrs. Maclaurin was questioning Mrs. Bernard as to her opinion of Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "Did you ever see so handsome a man before?" demanded she.

"I did not much observe his lordship, madame."

"Just like you. Lords are not so very plenty that you should not have felt some curiosity to see one. I suppose you have known so many lords that you pay little attention to them. But do you mean to say

you ever saw a finer nobleman than Lord Alexander Bowler?"

"I have seen some, madame, that struck me as being more noble-looking."

"That shows me you are no judge, for I, who ought, from my large fortune, to know something of lords, am sure that this one is the finest of them all, and those who think differently only prove their ignorance. I desire that you show his lordship proper respect at table to-day, for it is a great honour for you to dine with a nobleman of such high rank."

Mrs. Bernard was so accustomed to rudeness from Mrs. Maclaurin that it had now ceased to make the same painful impression on her as it had done when she first engaged with that lady; nevertheless, the dread of reproof operated so strongly on her that she feared to give her opinion on any subject, even when solicited to do so by Mrs. Maclaurin, and often by this timidity drew on herself the censure she wished to avoid. She now saw that Lord Alexander Beaulieu had made a deep impression in his visit of the morning, and looked forward with alarm to the dinner, during which she doubted not that the hostess would compromise herself still more.

CHAPTER XV.

With riches come a multitude of wants,
Unknown till luxury usurped the place
Of temperance. And heaps of gold are spent
To furnish forth to sated appetites
The costly viands which no pleasure yield,
But which, if absent, would again be craved;
For custom renders necessary things
That first, as luxuries, enjoyment gave;
And wealth, that might from poverty's stern grasp
So many rescue, pampers gluttony.

Punctual as a lover, Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered the *salon* of Mrs. Maclaurin as the clock was striking seven. He found the apartment nearly as light as day from the profusion of wax-lights distributed through it, and the lady herself attired in scarlet velvet, full-trimmed with point-lace, and wearing splendid ornaments of pearls and diamonds. A bandeau of the same precious gems encircled her head, and, being somewhat too tight, gave her broad and freckled forehead the appearance of the knee of a Highlander protruding from a tight garter. Plain and ill-favoured as Mrs. Maclaurin naturally was, the splendour of her

dress made her look still more ugly ; and her carriage and demeanour were so strikingly vulgar, as to force on every beholder the conviction that nature never designed her to enact the part of a lady, or to wear the costly ornaments which looked so wholly out of their place on her person. The coarseness of her complexion, the badness of her shape, and cast of her countenance, resembling those peculiar to the Irish apple-women to be seen at the corners of certain streets in London, appeared to still greater disadvantage when contrasted with the extreme richness of her dress. Her arms and hands, large, ill-shaped, and red, betrayed the hard work to which they had frequently been accustomed, the traces of which not all the cosmetics to which Mrs. Maclaurin had recourse could remove. There is, perhaps, no portion of the person which betrays low birth so plainly as the hands and feet ; and the legs and feet of a thoroughbred racer are not more dissimilar from those of a dray-horse, than are those members in a woman of gentle blood and in one of low birth. Never was Lord Alexander Beaulieu more convinced of this fact than when he beheld the ill-shaped red arms and hands of his hostess, the wrists confined by diamond bracelets, and the fubsey, square-topped fingers glittering with valuable rings. Her neck, too, short and ill-coloured, was encircled by pearls, whose delicate whiteness contrasted most unpleasingly with it, and her coarse bust was revealed by a style of dress that proclaimed alike her want of modesty and good sense, for the least portion of either would have led to a concealment of that part of her person. Mrs. Maclaurin jumped rather than arose

from her seat, so great was her desire to do honour to the reception of her aristocratic guest, the first she had ever received; and, in the abruptness of her movement, she knocked down her *tabouret*, and nearly fell over it. A portion of the lace-trimming of her dress got torn in her efforts to preserve herself from falling, and her whole person became crimsoned by the exertion.

"How glad I am to see your lordship again! It's very kind of you to come and take potluck with me. I'm quite grieved that I couldn't get turtle and venison for you, though I had the whole town searched for them; but this is a poor, mean place, where nothing good is to be found. I told the people here not to spare any expense, for I never spare money. You see how easy I took the tearing of this beautiful lace"—and she held up the torn trimming—"although it cost me twenty guineas a-yard. Pray be seated, my lord. Mrs. Bernard, what could ye be thinking of to let his lordship remain standing there, and never to place a chair for him?"

"I am shocked, madam, to give you so much trouble," said Lord Alexander, preventing Mrs. Bernard from placing a chair for him, and bowing politely to the poor *dame de compagnie*.

"Don't mind her, my lord; she's used to do everything for me; I only keep her for it."

Mrs. Bernard blushed to her very temples; and even Lord Alexander Beaulieu, albeit unused to feel much sympathy with the oppressed, experienced a sentiment of disgust at the rude and unfeeling conduct of the vulgar woman before him.

"Ring the bell, and order dinner to be served.

Didn't I tell you to have it put on the table the moment his lordship came?"

Lord Alexander, with the good breeding peculiar to the better part of his order, advanced to the bell before Mrs. Bernard could reach it, and performed the operation she had been commanded to do.

"O! my lord, you really shock me; your lordship must not be doing her work. Sure I keep her to do all my little odd jobs, such as writing my letters, ringing the bell, placing my footstool, and thranslating my scoldings to them foreign servants, which last service she does very badly; for they no more seem to mind her than if she was whistling jigs to a milestone."

"The dinner is served, madam," said the courier in Italian.

"And time for it," observed Mrs. Maclaurin. "We have been waiting a full quarter of an hour for it; and didn't I give ordhers that it was to be sent up the very minute his lordship arrived?"

The man, who understood not a word of what she said, retired, and, throwing open the folding-doors, a dinner-table, that might have served to dine twelve persons instead of three, was disclosed in the adjoining room, which, like the *salon*, was brilliantly illuminated. Four soups were on the table, at the head of which the hostess, led by Lord Alexander Beaulieu, seated herself. "What will your lordship please to take? will you have Pat of Italy? I never can say the word Pat without thinking of my poor counthry. I am an Irishwoman, my lord, and in Ireland, though we have plenty of Pats, we have no soup called afther them."

Lord Alexander had much difficulty to keep from

laughing, and he observed that Mrs. Bernard looked ashamed and embarrassed.

"How bad the foreign soups are, my lord!" resumed the obtuse hostess. "Such weak, wishy-washy stuff! No rich gravy soup, or ox-tail, or giblet, or, above all, turtle. I like my soup strong, and with plenty of pepper, which warms the mouth and makes one relish the first glass of wine. Now, isn't this too bad? Look at the four dishes of fish. All messed up so that one can't tell one from the other. Never can I see here a fine cod's head and shoulders with plenty of oyster sauce, or a large turbot with lobster; no, nor even boiled soles with shrimp sauce, or salmon, or, in fact, anything that is good."

But though she found fault with the fish, Mrs. Maclaurin nevertheless partook heartily of each sort, using her knife to convey the morsels to her mouth, to the no small horror and disgust of her guest.

"I'll take a glass of wine with you, my lord, if your lordship has no objection?"

"Madam, you do me too much honour."

"What wine do you prefer? I like champagne best myself, for it puts me into spirits."

"Champagne, then, let it be."

The wine poured out, Mrs. Maclaurin took her glass, and holding it up, said, "Here's to our better acquaintance, my lord," and drank off the contents. "Why don't ye tell 'em to remove the fish, and bring the rest of the dinner? What's the good of knowing their lingo if you don't make use of your

tongue?" and the uncouth hostess directed an angry glance at her alarmed *dame de compagnie*, to whom her speech had been addressed. When the next course was served—and it was sufficiently copious to have dined a party of twenty—Mrs. Maclaurin exclaimed, "Oh! look at the roast beef—was the like ever seen before? Not a sign of fat, and stuck full of bacon. They call this picking it—was there ever such fools? There's a dish, my lord, which they make a great fuss about. Will your lordship thry it? I am told it's very good, but I haven't the courage to eat it, though I know some people who buy it in London—I mean, wild bear." Lord Alexander looked astonished. "Yes," resumed the lady, "I know people who buy pieces of wild bear from the hair-dressers, who kill them for the bear's grease, which keeps the hair from falling off."

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Mrs. Bernard, with a deprecating countenance, "but the dish on the table to which you have referred is wild boar, and not bear's flesh."

"And why couldn't ye say so at first?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin, giving her a furious glance. "Your lordship eats nothing—positively nothing. Do have something else. I'm afraid there's not anything on the table that you like."

The lady herself, however, did ample justice to the viands set before her, eating of every dish, though finding fault with all, and importuning Lord Alexander Beaulieu to follow her example. Never had a dinner appeared to him so long and so *ennuyeux;* he

was consequently impatient for its termination, and decided on making his escape as early as it was possible, consistent with politeness.

"Drink another glass of champagne, my lord, it will do your lordship good, for your lordship seems a cup too low; I often feel so myself, but I think it is all the fault of this muggy climate. No sharp breezes to whet the appetite and brace the nerves. Well, I shan't be sorry when I get back to old England again, and see a good substantial meal set before me."

The dinner removed, an expensive dessert replaced it, and Mrs. Maclaurin was for again loading the plate of her guest, heaping fruit and conserves on it. "Now, do, my lord, pray do; 'twill do you good, indeed it will."

The hostess seemed to have no intention of retiring from the *salle-à-manger*, although the embarrassment of Mrs. Bernard, betrayed by anxious looks towards the door, and imploring ones to the lady, might have reminded any one less obtuse than Mrs. Maclaurin of the solecism in propriety she was committing by remaining so long there. She continued to partake of every fruit on the table, pronouncing each to be bad, and, to Lord Alexander Beaulieu's amazement and horror, washed them down by repeated bumpers of wine, which, strange to say, appeared to affect her so little as to induce the belief that her habits of intemperance were so confirmed as to render her in some degree proof against the effects of her unfeminine excess. Her spirits rose in proportion to her libations, and she volunteered a song, but even the

charm of her voice, and it still retained its pristine sweetness, could not make her guest forget the disgust occasioned by her conduct. He literally felt a loathing, as he looked at her ugly face, flushed from the effects of the wine she had drank, and allowed that wealth, however great its extent, would be dearly bought by wedding such a woman. But though Lord Alexander Beaulieu acknowledged this fact to himself, he was by no means disposed to abandon his project of marrying Mrs. Maclaurin, should she give her consent to their union. "She is even more hideous and vulgar than I could have imagined," thought he, "and, in addition, has contracted the most disgusting of all habits in a woman, that of inebriation. Nevertheless, if I can wed her, the indulgence of this horrible habit, and I will take especial care not to check it, will abridge her days, and free me from such a burden, leaving me at liberty to enjoy her wealth." Such were the reflections of this heartless man of the world, as he sat at the board of the vulgar woman whose fortune he longed to appropriate; while she, dazzled by his title, and captivated by his manner, and that indescribable air and tone peculiar to persons of high breeding, thought only of doing him honour, and securing his acquaintance.

At length the folding doors of the *salle-à-manger* were thrown open by the upper servant of Mrs. Maclaurin, and that lady was led by Lord Alexander Beaulieu to the drawing-room, where a table, laden with coffee, tea, and cakes of every description was set out.

"Doesn't this remind your lordship of England?"

exclaimed the lady, pointing to a pile of hot muffins and crumpets, and to a large sally lunn. "Yes, this and my breakfast are the only comfortable meals I have, for they are thoroughly English, thanks to an excellent London pastrycook, who is established at Rome. Through him I am also enabled to have beef-steaks and mutton-chops, and bottled porter for my luncheon every day, which keeps me alive, for positively I should die if I had not something to keep me up, after the bad dinners I get — a pack of kick-shaws enough to poison one. Do eat a hot muffin, or crumpet — you really must, for you ate nothing at dinner. Well, then, a slice of sally lunn—it is capital, I assure you, and the butter excellent. I got it from the dairy of a prince — I forget his name — who sells it instead of keeping it for his own use. Fancy a prince, a real prince, selling butter! Well, I'm sure none of our English princes would do such a thing; but, I forgot, we have no princes; our royal family are only dukes."

Lord Alexander, having witnessed the demolition of sundry muffins, crumpets, and slices of sally lunn, by Mrs. Maclaurin, and the emptying of several cups of tea, pleaded an indispensable engagement of long standing, and arose to depart.

"Sure you'll not go away so early," said the lady. "Stay a little longer, and let us have a comfortable chat by the fire."

Lord Alexander expressed great regret at the impossibility of his being able to remain, and so well enacted it that his hostess observed—

"If you can't stay now, what's to hinder your

coming back to have a bit of supper with me? Merely some broiled chicken with mushrooms, and a few other light things. I always have a hot supper; it makes such a good finish to the day, and insures one a good night's rest, for going to bed on an empty stomach is sure to keep me awake."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu urged an engagement with some of his male friends, after the *soirée* he was going to should be over, as an excuse for not returning to supper.

"Can't you bring 'em here? I like a merry party, and, as I know no one in Rome, I'll be very glad to make some pleasant acquaintances. Yes, bring some of those young lords here, and I'll order a larger supper."

"They could not think of coming, madam, without being previously presented to you."

"Oh! don't let them stand on any ceremony. I hate ceremony, and so I tell Mrs. Bernard every day. Would you believe it, that, when I proposed to send invitations to all the lords and ladies at Rome to come and dine with me, she persuaded me not to do so, saying, they would think it strange, and refuse to come. But I told her, how am I ever to make acquaintances if there is no beginning. They won't begin, so I must; and, as I have more money than any of them — ay, and perhaps than all of them put together — it's my place to invite them. Don't you think, my lord, I was right?"

"If I may be permitted to give an opinion, I should say that Mrs. Bernard's judgment was correct. It is not the usage in society, and persons of a certain rank

are peculiarly careful not to violate etiquette, or to accept invitations from total strangers."

"But it's their own fault that I'm a stranger to them. Here I am, ready and willing to be acquainted with them; and what more can I do than wish to show them a little Irish hospitality?"

"As you have done me the honour of consulting me, I hope you will allow me to advise you not to make any overtures towards acquaintance with the English society here. A single lady, travelling in Italy without the protection of a husband, father, or brother, is placed in a delicate situation, and, unless well known in the fashionable world, or presented by some lady of distinction, she would find it difficult, if not impossible, to enter the circles here."

"It's not my fault that I am travelling without a husband. The one I had — and a very good-natured old gentleman he was—is dead and gone; and, though I have had some offers of marriage since, none of them shuited me; but, if I could meet with a gentleman or nobleman" — and here the speaker looked full in the face of Lord Alexander Beaulieu—"who would not object to a rich wife, I'd soon make up my mind to change my condition, for, after all, it's but a solitary life to be always condemned to have no companion but Mrs. Bernard, who never says or does any thing to amuse or divart one."

There was no mistaking this hint, and it was not lost on him for whom it was meant, though the total want of womanly feeling which it indicated increased his bad opinion of the lady, to whom, having made his bow, he departed, heartily glad to have escaped

her presence, but fully determined to pursue his addresses to her. "I'll soon change her present vulgar system of reckless extravagance," thought he, as he proceeded to a *soirée* at Lady Melsingham's, "and find better use for the money she so foolishly lavishes in her own selfish enjoyments."

Thus reasoned Lord Alexander Beaulieu, forgetful that, while he found fault with the selfishness of Mrs. Maclaurin, he was no less culpable of that sin himself, in his determination to curb her enjoyments, that he might more fully indulge his own. But so it often is, those are most ready to censure in others the very vices most prevalent in themselves, and to curtail, if in their power, the expenditure that contributes to the pleasures of the very persons to whom they owe all they possess.

When Lord Alexander Beaulieu found himself that night in the midst of that circle which he considered the *ne plus ultra* of fashion, and into which Mrs. Maclaurin so ardently longed to obtain an entrance, the world's dread laugh when his courtship to the vulgar *parvenue* should become known, presented itself to his mind, and he shrank under it, even in anticipation. "But gold—gold," thought he, "will console me for the ridicule such a *mésalliance* cannot fail to excite; and, after all, my marriage will be like other events, but a nine days' wonder, soon to be forgotten for some newer topic."

"Where have you been hiding yourself, Axy?" said Lord Fitzwarren. "Come, tell me where you dined to-day. I looked for you everywhere, because I wanted you to dine with me; but, hang me, if I could

discover where you were. You are not a man to eat a bad dinner at your own expense, when you might get a good one at a friend's, are you, Axy?"

"I dined alone. Had a headache, and, by abstinence and temperance, two remedies not easily to be practised in your society, Fitz, I have got better."

"No, Axy, I won't believe a word of it. You have been about some mischief. I see it by your face, for you look as thoughtful as if you had lost some thousands on the Derby or Oaks."

"Or as if I were going to be married," added Lord Alexander.

"There's not much chance of that," said Lord Fitzwarren, piqued by the implied sarcasm; "younger brothers can't easily find wives now-a-days, unless they are content to wed city heiresses or rich dowagers."

"Better marry for money than be chosen for it," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "Poor men are compelled to wed for fortune; but rich ones are caught by portionless girls, who care not for the men, but for their wealth."

Lord Fitzwarren felt the sneer, but, doubtful of his own power of repaying it in kind, he abstained from replying, and moved away.

"I am so glad to have met you," said Lady Wellerby, rising from a card-table where she had just won three rubbers, and anxious not to risk any portion of her winnings by continuing to play. "I wished to speak to you about your friend Lord Fitzwarren. I know you have considerable influence over him, and I want you to exercise it, in order to induce him not to

persist in dining every day at his hotel, instead of coming to us. It looks so strange, so very unaccountable, that I fear it may give rise to ill-natured observations."

"In your place, Lady Wellerby, I would not interfere with his fancies. Let him dine where he likes, for Fitz is an obstinate fellow, and cannot bear being meddled with."

"But don't you think it is very strange that, being so desperately in love, and on the point of marriage with Lady Olivia, he should prefer dining away from her, nay, even remain so long at table after dinner, that he is not always fit for the society of ladies?"

"*Que voulez vous?* Such are his habits, and he is not likely to change them."

"But surely you might advise him, might hint at the impropriety of his continuing to pursue the same course, now that he is about to be married, that he did before he had proposed and been accepted."

"And so quarrel with an old friend, which would be the inevitable consequence of such officiousness on my part. No, Lady Wellerby, I have had too much experience to force advice on my friends; so you must excuse my interfering on this occasion."

"I dare say you are right, quite right, Lord Alexander Beaulieu; and, after all, the bright eyes of Olivia will do more in bringing him to our wishes than any advice, and I will trust entirely to that."

And Lady Wellerby turned to speak to Mrs. Sydney, who, with her lovely daughter and Strathern, who seldom left her side for a moment, were seated near the spot. A feeling of bitter hatred and envy,

similar to that which the serpent may have been supposed to have experienced, when contemplating the happiness of our first parents in Paradise, inflicted a severe pang on the breast of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he glanced on the happy countenances of the fair Louisa Sydney and the enamoured Strathern. "*He*," thought Lord Alexander, "has now a rich prize, uniting in herself, youth, beauty, good family, and a great portion, while I—I am compelled to stoop to ugliness, vulgarity of the coarsest description, and connexions of which, judging from the horrid woman herself, I can scarcely form too repelling an idea. Yes, they may well smile. Life wears for them its brightest aspect. How I hate them both! *Her*, for rejecting my vows, and *him* for being preferred. Would that I could wreak some portion of the vengeance my breast prompts on their heads!—that I could disturb that happiness which they so ostentatiously display! But I will not despair of yet accomplishing this. Mine is not a nature to forgive slights, or to let opportunities of punishing them pass by unheeded. Yes, ye may smile now, but a day shall come when your smiles shall be turned to bitter pangs, and I—I will be the cause. Were ye told this at present, ye would be incredulous, and hold in derision my threats, so confident are ye of your mutual affection and constancy; but I, who better know the weakness of human nature, and yours in particular, who am aware of the ungovernable pride and quick sensibilities of you both,—*I* know the vulnerable points to assail, and in anticipation rejoice in the torture I doom you to endure. And yet I could have loved this fair crea-

ture ; and her wealth, had she bestowed her hand on me, might have rendered me a good man. The temptations, instigated by poverty, that demon who prompts so much evil, would no longer have existed ; and in the enjoyment of affluence, and blessed with such a wife, my nature would have changed. But she spurned me, yes, contemptuously spurned me, and I—fool, dolt, idiot as I was—I offered to her mother the vows that she had rejected, and met a similar refusal. The mother and daughter have doubtlessly compared notes on my disastrous proposals, and consequently I have probably been made the subject of their scornful mirth. I loathe them both for this, and my wounded pride cries aloud for vengeance when we meet, and that I shrink with shame from their glance. Strathern, too—he is made acquainted with my rejected suits, and joins in their ridicule of me ; I see it in his altered mien, his averted eye. When were women known to conceal any triumph they may have achieved, or to have spared their mockery of any aspirant to their favour whom they may have repulsed ? Perhaps the very smiles now playing on the lips of all three have their origin in my rejection. There is wrath and hate—unquenchable and direful hate—in the thought ; and should my vengeance slumber, the recollection of these smiles shall awaken it, and urge me to work the ruin of their happiness, when least they dream of the hand they have armed against them."

Who that beheld Lord Alexander Beaulieu while these reflections were passing in his mind could have believed that the mild, gentlemanly-looking man, with manners so bland and demeanour so distinguished,

who made one of the fashionable crowd in the *soirée* at Lady Melsingham's, was, with the spirit of a fiend, contemplating the happiness of those who had never injured him, nay, who, while he imagined them smiling in derision at him, bestowed not a thought on him, and were at the moment unconscious of his presence! Alas for poor human nature! such plotters against the peace of others are not rare in society, and many are those who, urged on by envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, do not hesitate to wound those who have never injured them.

Before Lord Alexander Beaulieu had left his pillow the next morning, a note, so perfumed with otto of rose as to make his head ache, was presented to him. Gilt cupids, with all the emblems of the sly archer, decorated the border, with the glaring vulgarity of which the contents of the note bore no similarity. It contained only the following lines:—"Mrs. Bernard is commanded by Mrs. Maclaurin to request the honour of Lord Alexander Beaulieu's company at dinner to-day, at seven o'clock."

"By my faith, this wild Irish woman is determined not to let our acquaintance cool," said he, turning with distaste from the perfumed billet. "There will be no occasion for me to take any trouble to win her hand—and, ye gods! what a hand!—for I venture to say that ere many days have elapsed she will demand mine. I wish she was not such an abominable bore; for it would be convenient enough to find a good dinner at my hotel, which would cost nothing, when I had no other engagement. If she were less outrageously vulgar, I might ask one or two men to dine

with her, and so lighten the overpowering dulness that pervades her too substantial repasts; but she so exposes herself that I must keep her out of sight until the nuptial benediction shall give me the power to check her exuberance of manners, and modify her into something less offensive than she is at present."

"The lady has sent for an answer, my lord," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu's valet, entering, and breaking the chain of his master's reflections.

"Say I am not up—not awake—any thing—but add that an answer shall be sent when I have made my toilette."

"What a monster, thus to torment me!" resumed Lord Alexander, when the closing of the door assured him that his valet had departed. "Positively, I hate her more and more, as I discover how pushing and impudent she is. I plainly see I shall have no peace until I have a legal right to govern this obstreperous wom—no, hang it, I won't so far degrade the sex as to call her woman—this odious animal. Were she only modest and quiet, I could find it in my heart, in spite of her ignorance and ugliness, to behave tolerably well to her; but I see she will soon wear out my small stock of patience, and when that is gone she will find I am not a man to be trifled with. I never knew how abominable any thing in petticoats could be, until I made the acquaintance of the delectable Mrs. Maclaurin. I can hardly, much as I want money, bring myself to think of such a creature being called Lady Alexander Beaulieu. Faugh! it sticks in my throat. I must not think of it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Shun selfishness, nor let it entrance find
Within thy breast, for 'tis a deadly foe
To noble impulses and gen'rous deeds,
Cank'ring the heart where it doth once take root,
And stealing it 'gainst pity's soft appeals.
It knows not love, or friendship—all engross'd
By its own narrow joys, or cares, it lives
Shut out from sympathy with human kind."

"Well, Livy, and so the old governor tells me that we must go to Naples to be spliced, as Protestants can't be married at Rome. What a deuced bore, isn't it? I thought the thing could be done here without any trouble or bother, instead of which we are to be dragged to Naples in the company of the old people. The very thought of it sets me yawning."

"We shall soon be released from their society," said the Lady Olivia, "and a great relief it will be, for papa is so surly, and mamma so full of fancies, and so fond of giving advice, that I long to be away from them."

"Then you, Livy, have as great a dislike to being advised as I have, it seems. I never could stand it.

Even when a child, I used to fight the nursery governess for attempting to counsel me, and I often resented my poor mother's advice, though it was, I dare say, meant all for my good. But tell me, Livy, couldn't we manage to put off our marriage until we return to England? There we could have all matters so much better arranged. Settlements drawn up, wedding finery bought, new carriages ordered, horses purchased, and my houses brushed up."

"Oh! I'm sure, Lord Fitzwarren, if *you* are not in a hurry, I am not," and Lady Olivia bridled and looked greatly offended.

"Come, Livy, don't be angry. I am very willing that we should be spliced to-morrow, for the matter of that, but I hate trouble and bother, and I foresee I shall have plenty of both, with the old ones."

"Can't you write home to your lawyer, to have the settlement drawn up and sent out here for our signatures?"

"You are right; so I can, and will, too, by this very post. I wonder I never thought of it before. You have a good head, Livy, I am glad to see. It will take from eighteen to twenty-one days for my letter to get to town—three weeks or a month for those plaguy lawyers to have the title-deeds examined and the settlement drawn—and eighteen days to bring them here; so that it will be nearly three months before we can be married. This is a bore, for I like to do every thing off-hand, without delay, just as I do out hunting, when I never look before I leap, lest I should funk, and become a timid rider. Rome gets terribly stale to me, Livy, and I have just been think-

ing that, to wile away the next three months, it would amuse one to run over Italy a little. I have seen nothing of it yet but Florence and this dull place, and I should like to go to Venice, on thence to Naples, and make a tour in Sicily, and so meet you at Naples by the time the settlements can arrive there. Don't you think this would be a good plan, Livy?"

Lady Olivia, though really indifferent to her future husband, whose society was even irksome to her, was nevertheless mortified and offended at this convincing proof of his indifference towards her. She felt that, if he had any attachment to her, he would not propose a separation of three months merely for his pleasure, and she resented this indifference on his part as warmly as if she herself were not conscious of an equal want of affection towards him. She had, however, acquired a sufficient knowledge of his character to be fully aware of the impolicy of betraying the anger she felt; and, though bursting with rage, she smoothed her brow, and said, that though a separation from him of three months would give her great pain, she would not put her own pleasure in competition with his, and should, therefore, not oppose his wishes. Never had Lady Olivia previously achieved so great a conquest over her temper, and it soon met its own reward, for Lord Fitzwarren, gratified by her docility, declared that she was a deuced sensible girl not to wish to have him always tied to her apron-string, and that he liked her all the better for her readiness to meet his wishes.

"I'll be off to-morrow," said he, "for the sooner

the better. I'm heartily tired of Rome, and shall be glad when I leave it."

"You will dine here, won't you?" and Lady Olivia put on her most winning smile.

"No, Livy, it's impossible. I cannot stand the old governor's dinners and wine. Both are execrable; and life is too short to spoil one's comfort by eating bad dinners, and drinking bad wine, when one can get better."

"But you will come early in the evening? Do, pray, dear Fitzwarren."

"As early as I can, Livy. I hate to gulp down my wine in a hurry, and I must smoke half-a-dozen cigars, my usual quantum; and then I have to change my dress, lest you should be annoyed by the odour of the smoke; so you see it will be late before I can get here."

Still Lady Olivia smiled as blandly as ever, nor even when her selfish and unloving future husband took his departure, urging the necessity of looking out for some fellow to partake his dinner, did she evince the slightest symptom of the angry emotions that were struggling in her breast. When, however, he had left the house, she could no longer control her feelings, and a passionate burst of tears revealed their bitterness.

"To be thus slighted by such a brute," said she, "after all the pains I have taken to win him, is too, too mortifying. How I hate him!" but, ere she could finish the sentence, and the expression of her countenance indicated that it breathed of future vengeance

for present slights, the door was hastily opened, and Lord Fitzwarren entered.

"I forgot my handkerchief," said he, walking up to the chair where he had left it; and then observing, for the first time, the tears of Lady Olivia, which she vainly sought to check, he took her hand, and, with more gentleness than he usually evinced, asked what was the cause of her weeping.

"Tell me, Livy, what is the matter? I never saw you thus before. I can't bear to see a woman cry; it makes me feel quite out of my element. Come, Livy, tell me, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing," sobbed the lady, a sudden thought flashing across her artful mind, of turning the tears or anger she could not check to good account. "I have been wea—weak, and fool—foolish, at the thought of your leav — leaving me for so long a time, and was so overpowered that all my good resolutions of not giving way to my feelings vanished," and she wept anew. "Don't blame me, dear Fitzwarren, for indeed I could not help it!"

"Poor Livy! Don't cry — there's a dear, good girl!" and, softened by her emotion, which he received as a genuine proof of her affection, he never felt so well disposed towards his future wife as at that moment.

"You will think me so weak, so childish," and her sobs nearly impeded her utterance. "I would not weep before you, but, when I thought you were really gone, my tears would no longer be controlled."

"You have a warm and affectionate heart, Livy—that you have," and he put his arm around her waist

and kissed her cheek. "And you are a good girl, Livy, not to have tried to argue me out of going. If you had, ten to one I should only have been more determined on it, for I am an obstinate fellow, and as difficult to be managed as my mare Fanny, who always would have her own way; but now that I see you are really grieved, and have shown no ill temper about it, I'll put off my tour for a week; so dry your eyes, Livy, and let me find you this evening as gay as ever when I come."

So saying, Lord Fitzwarren, having again pressed his lips on the brow of his lady-love, took his leave, well satisfied with her, and still more so with himself. "The poor girl is desperately fond of me, that's clear," thought he. "I didn't think she was so devilishly in love with me," and he pulled up the collar of his shirt, and threw himself to the utmost height of his stature. "Well, I must say it showed very good sense in her not to cry until I was gone. I'm glad though that I caught her in tears, poor soul! It makes me like her better than before—yes, much better. If that plaguy girl, Miss Sydney, had only loved me half so well as poor Livy does—if I could but have seen *her* shed tears at the thought of my absence, hang me if I shouldn't have been ready to give up every thing—ay, and do any thing on earth she liked! It's odd how that girl sticks in my mind! but I suppose it is because she is so confoundedly handsome, and above all, perhaps, because I know I can't have her. Devil take her, say I, with all my heart, for preferring that fellow Strathern to me! What could she see in him to make her accept him, when she was so cold and

haughty to me? Well, Livy wouldn't, I'm sure — no, *she* is really devoted to me. Never saw a girl so much in love in all my life; I'm afraid she'll be plaguishly jealous — all loving wives are — and that would be a horrid bore! Poor Livy! I must really not make her unhappy; but what is a fellow to do who is rather good-looking, and rather admired by the women? 'Tisn't my fault if they will take a fancy to me, for I don't lay myself out to please them — never did, and never will—but, somehow or other, they will take a fancy to me."

Soon after Lord Fitzwarren had left Lady Olivia, her mother and sister, who were in the next room, entered; and Lady Wellerby, observing the traces of tears in her daughter's eyes, inquired the cause. "Have you had any quarrel with him, Olivia?" demanded she. "You know I cautioned you to avoid the least difference of opinion with him, for he is as obstinate as a mule, and will not bear the slightest contradiction."

"I should think that I am not quite such a fool as not to know how to manage him by this time," said the Lady Olivia, looking very sulky.

"But why have you been in tears? Something must have occurred to make you weep, for you are not prone to shed tears, and I am really alarmed for the consequences. It would be too bad if any thing should now occur to disturb a marriage so happily arranged, and to which we all look forward with such delight."

"If any thing could disturb it, it would be the bad dinners and wine here, which prevent Fitzwarren

from dining with us, and so he is thrown among men who might talk him out of marrying."

"Bad dinners and wine here! why you really surprise me, Olivia. Your father does nothing but scold me from morning till night on the expensiveness of our table, and, no later than this very morning, insisted on my making a new arrangement with Lambertini, our host, to furnish our dinners on a more moderate scale and for less money."

"Well, I never heard any thing to equal the coolness of a lover telling the object of his affection that her father's dinners and wine are not good enough to induce him to come and partake them with her. Poor Olivia! what a prospect of misery is before you!"

"I don't require your pity, Sophia, and I beg you will reserve it."

"Pray don't quarrel, girls; but tell me, Olivia, the cause of your tears."

"Is it not enough to make any one cry to have a father so stingy that he will not, on an occasion like the present, allow proper dinners, when the want of them compels Lord Fitzwarren to dine away from me?"

"If he cared a straw for you, Olivia, he would prefer the worst dinner possible with you to the best when absent from you."

"Just like you, Sophia; always putting the most ill-natured construction on everything, and saying the most spiteful things."

"I only speak the truth. Ask any one, and he or she will tell you exactly what I have done."

"I did not think, Olivia," observed the lady-mother, "that you had allowed your feelings to be at all interested by Lord Fitzwarren. I fancied that you considered your marriage with him wholly as one *de convenance*."

"Nevertheless, it is not possible for me, mamma, to see myself ill-treated without my being wounded by it. When neither you or papa will put yourselves the least out of the way to please and conciliate my future husband, is it to be wondered at that, instead of showing me proper attention and respect, he never dines here, and is thrown among a set of brutes of men who encourage him to drink and smoke every evening? He now proposes to set off for Venice, thence to Naples and Sicily."

"Good gracious! you don't really mean this! No, no; we must guard against such a measure by every means in our power, for the probability is that, if he once got away, there would be an end to the marriage. I don't wonder you wept, my poor Olivia. You must really have been greatly alarmed by such a proposal coming from him."

"Does not this very proposal prove that he does not care a pin for Olivia?" observed Lady Sophia.

"Sophy, you will drive me mad, with your ill-nature;" and here a few more tears chased each other down the flushed cheeks of Lady Olivia.

"Hold your tongue, Sophy, and don't irritate your sister. Lay aside your jealousies and quarrels, and let us consult on what is best to be done to prevent this foolish man's getting out of our clutches."

"The first thing is, to get good dinners and wines,

to induce him to dine here instead of at his own hotel: and the second is, to make the sacrifice of letting him smoke here."

"Really, Olivia, I don't know how all this is to be managed. I'll try to make your father understand the necessity of a change in our dinners, but for the smoking, it is too much to expect. I never could bear the horrid odour of tobacco, and....."

"You prefer risking the happiness of your daughter to supporting a disagreeable odour for a short time," observed Lady Olivia, reproachfully.

"You do me injustice, Olivia, indeed you do. There is nothing to which I would not submit rather than you should miss so eligible a marriage, and I will go and say all I can to your father to induce him to come into our plans, and co-operate with us."

"O! how I wish I was married!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, as her mother left the room. "Once secure of being Countess of Fitzwarren, with a large settlement and a good allowance, and I will pay off this selfish man for all his sins. But to be compelled to restrain my indignation, and enact the agreeable when I am bursting with anger, is more than I can bear."

"Then you acknowledge that the brute *does* vex and annoy you, Olivia?" observed Lady Sophia; "yet when I expressed my sympathy, you resented it as an insult."

"Sympathy I never experienced from you, Sophy; and pity I scorn to accept from any one;" and Lady Olivia drew herself up proudly, and withdrew.

When Lady Wellerby sought her lord, she found

him engaged in looking over the bills of the last month. This periodical occupation never failed to have a very disagreeable effect on his temper, which, never good, became most irascible on these occasions, —a fact so well known to his family in general, but to his lady-wife in particular, that his daughters and servants avoided his presence as much as possible, and Lady Wellerby dreaded to enter it.

"A pretty system of extravagance you have been carrying on during the last month," said he, looking angrily at his *cara sposa*, and pointing to a long bill on the table.

"Really, Lord Wellerby, I cannot accuse myself of a single act of extravagance, and cannot even imagine to what you refer."

"The devil you can't! But so you always say. What do you call the ices, orgeats, lemonades, and cakes, furnished for your 'at homes' once a week, without counting the expense of lights? yet you tell me, forsooth, that you cannot accuse yourself of a single act of extravagance. Have I not cited extravagance?—yes, shameful, wanton extravagance! What occasion is there for your receiving people once a week, or at all, for the matter of that? Are there not fools enough here to throw open their rooms for company without your doing so? But I tell you what, Lady Wellerby, I'll stand no more such nonsense; if you can't live without society, go out and seek it at other people's expense."

Lady Wellerby had lived long enough with her husband to be aware that the most prudent plan to adopt with him when angry was to let him talk on

until he had exhausted his breath, and then to put in her rejoinder. That moment had now arrived, and she took advantage of it.

"How a man of your knowledge of the world, Lord Wellerby, can suppose that I could go out night after night accepting the invitations of my acquaintance, without, in return, opening my doors to them at least once a week, and in the cheapest of all manners, a *soirée*, does indeed surprise me. Nay, more, I must confess I am hurt to find that, after the brilliant marriage I have secured for our daughter, you betray so little sense of the value of my exertions that you reproach me for the trifling expense incurred to keep up my acquaintance with the society here, which is of course so highly advantageous to my girls."

"But having secured a husband for Olivia, where is the necessity of now receiving company once a week, Lady Wellerby?"

"Have I not still a husband to find for Sophia, and how is this to be done without my making every exertion in my power? The fact is, my dear, I came to tell you that, for Olivia's sake, it is indispensably necessary that you undraw your purse-strings, and..."

"Hold, Lady Wellerby, I foresee what is coming. Some new project of expense is, I plainly see, running in your head, and I tell you, once for all, that I will not adopt it."

Lord Wellerby was warm, drew his breath heavily, and beat his fingers on the table, two well-known symptoms of his discomposure, and indicative of an obstinate determination to retain his own opinions.

"What would you say if I were to tell you that

there is considerable danger of Lord Fitzwarren jilting Olivia?—ay, you look incredulous, but I repeat it—and all because you will not give him good dinners and wine."

"Why, what the devil do you mean, Lady Wellerby? You can't be serious. No, it's impossible that any man could behave so ill!"

"I assure you I left poor Olivia in tears—yes, my lord, in tears!"

"Oh! for the matter of that, you women always have tears at will. You will cry for any thing—ay, faith, and for nothing—so I don't attach much importance to her weeping."

"She wept, Lord Wellerby, because her future husband told her that he could not dine here owing to the bad dinners and wine you gave."

"And who the devil asked him, I should like to know? Not I, I'll be sworn, for I could see no good, once he was caught, in throwing away money in dinners for him. People give them to catch husbands for their daughters, and not after they are secured. Besides, it puts me out of patience to see fools making love, when I know that in a few months after the knot is tied they'll wish each other a thousand miles off, or probably worse."

"I do not wish to interfere in your opinion; all I desire is to acquaint you that Lord Fitzwarren, by dining away from Olivia every day, and giving up a couple of hours after to his smoking, gets weaned from her society, and now shows so much indifference as to propose leaving Rome on a tour, and proceeding to Sicily, there to remain until the settlements are

sent out from England, and that the marriage can take place at Naples."

"The devil he does! This looks as if he began to change his mind. And yet so far from thinking that his not dining here every day, and being tied to Olivia's apron-string all the evening had led to this, I should think that it would produce the very contrary effect; for I have known fellows so tired of the society of the girls they were to marry, while the lawyers were drawing out the settlements, that, could they have decently got out of the engagement, they would never have fulfilled it. Women never make a greater mistake than when they fancy they can't give too much of their company to their admirers, and we men could give them some good advice on this subject. Now, if this blockhead—and a blockhead I pronounced him from the first to be—begins already to be tired of Olivia, be assured the way to render him completely so will be to have him to dine here often, however good the dinners and wine offered him may be; consequently, there is no use in throwing away money in that way. If he is really determined on leaving Rome, let us affect to think his plan a very natural and eligible one, and offer not the slightest obstacle to it. Opposition always inflames a weak man to carry his schemes into effect, whereas an approval of them often induces him to abandon them. Let Olivia be careful never to thwart him in any thing. Let her give way to all his fancies, however unreasonable they may be, and, above all, let her appear to think that whatever he says or does is and must be right, and all will turn out well. The more I reflect on it, the less reason I

see to fear the result, though I was startled at the first moment when I heard he proposed leaving Rome. If he goes, she can, as they are engaged, and so soon to be married, write to him, and, by filling her letters with flattery, he will be more devoted to her when absent than present. *Flattery* is a grand secret for *keeping* as well as for *catching* men. Without it they soon tire of the society of the handsomest and cleverest women; and the least gifted, both in mind and person, of your sex, who will condescend to flatter one of mine, will be sure to gain favour with him. But it's not necessary to tell *you* this; *you* know it well enough, and tried it on me with perfect success. If you had not, I should never have been caught by *you*, I can answer for it; and, like all who have been duped, I take a spiteful pleasure in seeing others victimized."

"How can you, Lord Wellerby, assert what you must know to be unjust towards me? Our long union and my unaltered and unalterable affection ought to..."

"Stuff—nonsense, Lady Wellerby! don't try to humbug me! It's useless, perfectly useless. I understand you perfectly, and you ought to understand me by this time. Neither of us can impose on the other; but as we have the same interest in getting our girls off our hands—are launched in the same boat, as one may say—we must pull together, put on a good face, and keep our own secrets. I shan't tell the world that I know you to be a heartless, weak woman, devoted to the card-table, and you, I dare say, will not disclose to your cronies that I am an unmanageable husband—brute, I suspect, would be the term you

would apply—who will not allow you to injure my fortune by your extravagance."

"Was there ever such a man!" exclaimed the mortified Lady Wellerby, as the door closed after her *brusque* husband. "He is indeed a perfect brute; and, though I have carefully refrained from even hinting to him that such is my opinion, he verifies the truth of the proverb that 'a guilty conscience needs no accuser,' and has guessed my thoughts. Well may he say he is unmanageable! What have I left undone to conciliate him? Have I not borne and forborne to a degree that would have tested the patience of a saint, and all to no end? and now to have the mortification to know that it is impossible to make him believe a single thing I would persuade him to! He is so cunning, that there is no imposing on him; so *brusque*, that no submission will mollify him; so stingy, that it is next to impossible to get a guinea out of his purse; and so unfeeling, that he only laughs at the annoyance he inflicts. And it was to become his wife, and to endure long years of humiliation and ill-humour, that I used every art to please and win him! Would that my efforts had been unsuccessful; far better had it been to have remained single all my days than to have married him! What bright visions I indulged of wedded life before I entered its pale! With fortune and rank, I dreamt not that happiness might be unattainable; and, though I cared not for him through whom these advantages were to be acquired, I doubted not that I should be as happy as most of the fashionable women of my acquaintance. He has defeated all my schemes, destroyed all my hopes, and, were it not

for the excitement furnished me by the card-table, my existence would be insupportable. Then how hard is it to be compelled to wear a mask, to smile when one is much more disposed to weep, and to make the world believe that one has the kindest husband, the most dutiful children, and the happiest home imaginable, when one is writhing under the conviction of having precisely the reverse of all these blessings! To know this, and yet not be able to wish *him* dead, is too vexatious. But such is my fate; for my jointure is so miserably small, and I am so well convinced that he will bequeath me but little should I happen to survive him, that I should find myself still worse off as a widow than as a wife. Were it not for this conviction, how would I pray to be released from the heavy chain that has so long galled me, and how joyfully would I don my sables! Well, there is no use in repining, and so I have said to myself hundreds of times during the many weary years I have dragged on with this unfeeling man. If I can but get both girls off my hands, I shall be content; and then I will defeat his plan of settling down in the country, by counterfeiting some internal malady which will require my being always in some capital within reach of medical aid.

"I must now go and advise Olivia how to play her cards, though thankless enough I must say she is, for all the good counsel I have lavished on her. How strange it is that my daughters should be so heartless! They must take after their father, it is clear, for they have none of my good-nature, or sensibility, or that perfect freedom from selfishness, which has always been so striking a characteristic of me. Well, the fault is not mine.

I have done all that was possible, both by precept and example, to render them estimable and amiable, but their father's evil nature predominates over mine in their characters, and cannot be subdued. I wish, with all my heart, I was rid of them, for they exercise my patience to its utmost limit. Heigh-ho! who would be a wife to such an odious man as Lord Wellerby, or mother to such self-willed daughters as mine?"

Thus soliloquised Lady Wellerby, and, strange to say, like many others, more addicted to scrutinise the characters of those with whom they live than to look into their own, she had made herself perfectly acquainted with all the defects of her husband and daughters—defects which she was by no means disposed to extenuate or gloss over—while she not only remained in perfect ignorance of those evil qualities existing in her own nature, but positively believed that she was possessed of no ordinary points of sensibility, good-nature, and disinterestedness—a strange self-deception, under which innumerable persons labour, and out of which few can be reasoned!

"I have seen your father, my dear Olivia," said Lady Wellerby, as she entered the *salon* where both her daughters were seated; "and I cannot prevail on him to consent to our giving better dinners and wine, in order to induce Lord Fitzwarren to dine here. I assure you, I have left nothing unsaid to bring him to our wishes, but he is impracticable, and remained deaf to my advice."

"I expected nothing else," replied Lady Olivia, who, ever since her engagement to Lord Fitzwarren, had

assumed an impertinence of tone and manner towards her parents, but more especially her mother, no less unbecoming than reprehensible.

"Let me, therefore, advise you, my dear Olivia, to....."

"Pray let there be a truce to advice, mamma. I have had quite enough of it, and can assure you I have a much better chance of success in the management of my affairs, by being left to follow the suggestions of my own judgment, formed on my knowledge of the character of Lord Fitzwarren, than by adopting your's or papa's."

"This ingratitude is unlooked-for, wholly so, Olivia," and Lady Wellerby put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Ingratitude!" repeated Lady Olivia; "I really am at a loss to comprehend what ingratitude is to be found in my preferring to take the management of that which concerns only me, and in the most important event of my whole life, into my own hands!" and she arose and left the room without one word of kindness to her mother.

END OF VOL. I.

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